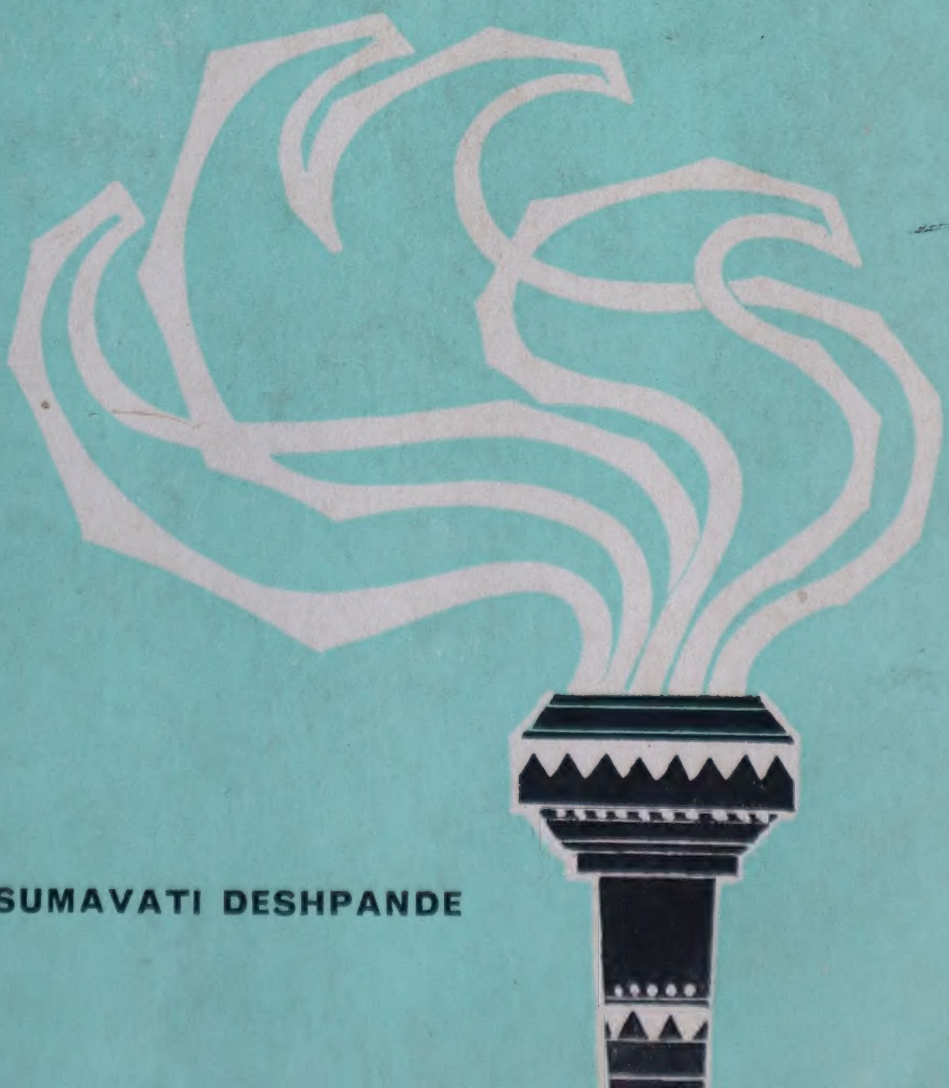
Marathi Sahitya..



KUSUMAVATI DESHPANDE

MARATHI SAHITYA

(Review of the Marathi Literature up to 1960)

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The cultural heritage of our Motherland in all its diverse forms is the common property of not only the people of India but of the whole of mankind and it involves obligation on the part of all of us to enrich it in every way possible.

An attempt however small to bring within reach of an average Indian authentic information on the important aspects of this history and culture in order to make possible a two-way flow of information between the different States of India, could supply an essential need for securing harmony in inter-State relations and promote national integration.

The Maharashtra Information Centre has, with these humble objects in view, projected a series of booklets on Maharashtra. They will be only introductory but will deal with most aspects of the history and the economic and cultural life of the people of the State. The contributors are authorities in their subjects and well known for their erudition.

The present series, which includes twelve booklets, is published in English and Hindi and attempts will be made to publish them in other Indian languages. About a dozen more titles are also envisaged in the

near future. Both series are only illustrative and not comprehensive in character and design. Nor will there be any rigidity of opinions expressed by the authors.

It is hoped that the series will help to remove the lack of understanding which retards the growth of a healthy national feeling and go a long way in bringing the people of Maharashtra closer to the people of other States.

The Maharashtra Information Centre extends its cordial thanks to all the authors and artists who have participated in this venture.

MAHARASHTRA seems to have existed as a social and political entity from the fourth century after Christ. It formed a part of what was earlier known as *Dakshinapath* or the 'Southward Way'. This was an extension of the homeland of the Aryans of the North. The Aryan colonies to the south of the Vindhyas seem to have sprung up about 700 B.C. There are references to *Dakshinapath* in the *Vartikas* of Katyayana, which date back to 700 B.C. These references grow more frequent in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and later in various Buddhistic works. This was the age of the dawn of Buddhism. The religious revolution led to a spreading out of the Aryans from the North. Six small states, Gopa-rashtra, Malla Rashtra, Pandu Rashtra, Aparanta, Vidarbha and Ashmaka were formed in the South. They were naturally composed of people drawn from the pre-Panini settlers like the Nagas and the post-Panini Aryans. Some of them, like the Pandu Rashtra and Malla Rashtra seem to have had even a predominantly Dravidian strain. These Rashtras evolved and developed under various dynasties like Maurya, Satawahana, Traikutaka, Wakataka, Kalachuri, Rashtrakuta and Chalukya. These six states together constituted Maharashtra. The first reference to it as 'Maharashtra' is found in a work

called *Maharashtra* of about A.D. 500. Varahamihira gives a description of the people. The Aihole inscription (A.D. 634) describes Satyashraya Pulakeshi as the supreme ruler of 'three Maharashtras'. Hiuen-Tsang refers to it as 'Moholosh'. References to Maharashtra are also found in Dandi, Vararuchi, and Vatsyayana.

The Origin of Marathi

The origin of Marathi has been described variously. From the Vedic language and Sanskrit are believed to have been derived Shauraseni, Magadhi, Paishachi and Maharashtri – the four different languages spoken in Mathura Mandal, Magadh, Balhik (Punjab etc.) and Maharashtra. A further change in these resulted in the Apabhramsha languages. Marathi was derived from Maharashtri-Apabhramsha. The precision and pointedness of the phonetic value in Sanskrit were lost through a process of popularisation in Apabhramsha during the Buddhistic period. These values were, to some extent, re-acquired by Marathi during the revival of the Vedic religion. Marathi may thus be described as being a re-Sanskritised and developed form of Maharashtri-Apabhramsha. The four pre-Apabhramsha languages were in vogue until about A.D. 875. They had risen to a high literary

level. Rajshekhar has used Maharashtri in his play *Karpurmanjari*. Literary works in Shauraseni, Magadhi and Paishachi are also extant. The Apabhramsha languages are believed to have come into use about 200 years later and to have remained in vogue for more than a century. Maharashtri-Apabhramsha, also known as Jain Apabhramsha, has been used widely in Jain literature and forms an important link in the evolution of Marathi. It is found to have been in vogue by about A.D. 400, and it is of this Apabhramsha that Marathi is believed to be a developed and re-Sanskritised form. It was not only widely in use but also had attained a place of social and literary distinction by A.D. 1275. It extended to the Vindhya and Satpura ranges in the north, to Chhota Nagpur and Andhra Desh in the east, the North Canara district in the south and the Arabian sea in the west.

It is difficult of course to trace the very beginning of any language. One can only go by the dates of acknowledged inscriptions or manuscripts. The first of such Marathi inscriptions available is dated A.D. 983. It consists of but one sentence : "Shri Chawundaraje karawiyale." This sentence has been inscribed in the two current languages, Marathi and Kannad, at the foot of the huge stone image of

Gomateshwar in Shrawan-Belgola, near Mysore. The image was carved out of a huge rock-hill during the reign of Rachmal Gang by order of his minister Chawundarai. It is obvious that at this time Marathi was one of the distinctly different current languages, widely used by the people of this area. The six inscriptions now available dating between A.D. 979–1270 and placed in distant parts like Mysore, Khandesh and Bombay are an index of the large area over which Marathi was spoken.

This Maharashtra society had attained a high cultural level. This was the community of Bhavabhuti and Bhaskaracharya. Changdev, the grandson of Bhaskaracharya, established a University for the propagation of the theories of his grandfather, and used Marathi in the inscription in that place. Rajshekhar, the author of *Kavya Mimamsa,* was also a Maharashtra Brahmin. The works of these writers show that Sanskrit was the medium of all learned exposition and classical creative literature. But the language of every-day use of this cultured community was Marathi. This is abundantly proved by the inscriptions which were meant for all the common folk who visited Shrawan-Belgola or the beautiful temple near Dhond. It is because the language was spoken so widely that the deeds of charitable

gifts like the one at Patan recording the maintenance grants given by King Soidev to Changdev's University or *Math* mentioned above, in A.D. 1207, and the imperial mandates expected to be obeyed by all, like the Edict of King Aparaditya, of A.D. 1183, were inscribed in Marathi. The language had attained a venerable place in court life by the time of the Yadav Kings.

The Pandharpur inscription (A.D. 1273) of the days of Raja Shiromani Ramdevrao is in flawless Marathi. Marathi was now spoken by all classes and castes. Treatises in Marathi were written and read out in the court of Ramdevrao, who was always pleased to have them dedicated to himself. In the twelfth century, during the reign of the last three Yadav Kings, a great deal of literature in verse and prose was created, such as : (*i*) stories for children, like *Panchatantra* ; (*ii*) songs and stories for women, like those of Someshwar ; (*iii*) stories from the Puranas in verse or prose, like *Ramayan* or *Krishnacharitra* of Rasal Kavi – these stories were of great help in retaining the hold of Hinduism over the masses at a time when Buddhism and Jainism were growing powerful ; (*iv*) treatises on astrology and medicine and such other subjects for Brahmins not very well-versed in Sanskrit. Shripati's work on astrology

called *Ratnamala* is an example. A good deal of literature was written for kings and courtiers. This class hardly ever undertook an intensive study of Sanskrit. Ambitious authors would therefore prefer the medium of Marathi in order to appeal directly to the king or patron. The worth of a composition in Sanskrit would reach his ears only through the recommendations of middle-men like pundits and counsellors to the King. Long, rhetorical and highly decorative poems like *Nalopakhyan* and *Rukmini-Swayamwar* would, therefore, be written in Marathi and read out in the Raj-sabha. If the King was a religious and philosophical person, these pundits even tried their hands at exposition of Vedanta in lucid Marathi. One of the best examples of this is Mukundaraj's *Vivek-sindhu*.

The history of Marathi literature may conveniently be divided into five periods :

1.	The Yadav Period ..	A.D. 1189–1320
2.	The Bahamani Period ..	1320–1600
3.	The Maratha Period ..	1600–1700
4.	The Peshwa Period ..	1700–1850
5.	The British Period ..	1850–1947

During the first two of these periods, Marathi literary genius occupied itself chiefly with religious and philosophical exposition. In contrast, the earliest

Hindi book according to generally accepted opinion, is one on *alankaras* or figures of speech. Hindi literature, during the first two periods from A.D. 650 to 1387 was chiefly rhetorical and secular in tone. It was produced in various dialects like Maithili, Rajasthani, Awadhi, and Braj. Gujarati, the neighbour language of Marathi, saw the beginnings of its literature in A.D. 1185 in the *Bharateshwara-bahubali Rasa* by Salibhadra. This was secular and heroic in spirit.[1] The main and perhaps the sole current in Marathi literature, however, during the Yadav and Bahamani periods, was of religious and philosophical exposition. This exposition, like the early literature in all languages, was in verse. Mukundaraj, the arch-poet of Marathi, wrote his *Vivek-sindhu* primarily with the object of opening out before his patron Jaitrapal a 'sea of philosophy'. He wrote it at the age of sixty when, as he says, "even breathing was tiring to him". It is believed that he wrote this in a place now known as Ambhor in Madhya Pradesh where he was staying near the Samadhi of his Guru. He bases his exposition of the basic tenets of the Hindu philosophy and Yoga Marga on *Shankarokti*, i.e. the utterances or teachings of Shankaracharya.

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[1] K. M. Munshi : *Gujerat and its Literature*.

and he undertook these labours in order that the world should be cleansed and sanctified and made happy. The work consists of eighteen chapters with a total of 1671 verses in the *owi* metre. Mukundaraj also wrote other works like *Paramamrit, Pavanavijay, Mulstambha, Panchikaran,* etc. He wrote in a chaste and lucid style which has a freshness worthy of the precursor of Dnyaneshwar. Mukundaraj is believed to have belonged to the Nath sect founded by Gorakhnath. This religious sect gained wide popularity in Upper India. Gorakhnath used Hindi for his literary and religious compositions in order to reach the masses and inculcate his religio-philosophical ideas in them. He was also the first to introduce a non-bardic strain in Hindi poetry. His influence spread in the South, and in Maharashtra. A continuous line of the Nath tradition is found in Maharashtra – in Gorakhnath, Gaininath, and others. There is a Marathi work called *Amarnath-Samwad* attributed to Gorakhnath. The syntax, diction, and script show that the work belongs to the eleventh century.

Yadav literature was not however limited to religious subjects only. Hemadri, the versatile administrator of Ramdevrao, was a great patron of learning, art, and letters. Under his patronage were

written a number of works in Sanskrit. His own voluminous *Chaturvarga-chintamani* lays down the principles of the caste system, systematises the mutual relations and respective duties of the four classes, and prescribes rules about various kinds of ritualistic observances. His *Lekhankalpataru* is a Marathi treatise on the practice of writing, with a careful consideration of polite modes of address, forms of letters, etc.

The origin of Marathi prose also is to be found in the Yadav period. The credit for its creation goes to another religious sect called the Mahanubhavs. The sacred books of this sect were unknown to literary history until about twenty-five years ago. Every lover of Marathi literature must gratefully acknowledge the debt owed to the late V. L. Bhave who discovered for modern Maharashtra this vast heritage of simple Marathi prose. The founder of the Mahanubhav sect, Chakradhar, hailed from Gujarat. He was the only son (known as Harpal) of Vishaldev, the minister of the Gujarat king Trimalla Dev. This Harpal having lost all his money in his passion for dice, fell into a deep melancholy. He started on a pilgrimage to Ramtek in old Madhya Pradesh but when on the way he reached Riddhipur (in Vidarbha), he came there under the influence

of a saintly pundit called Govind Prabhu. He took Guru-mantra (initiation) from him, and was named by him Chakradhar. Stories of wide travel and varied experiences are attributed to Chakradhar. He became a sannyasi in A.D. 1267 and founded his own religious sect. Thereafter he led an extremely austere life of wandering mendicancy. He travelled widely over Maharashtra, which land he preferred to all others. "One should live in Maharashtra, neither in Kannad, nor in Telangan," he said. He had a large following of disciples like Nagdev, Mhai Bhat, Nathoba and also some women disciples like Nagambika and Mahadaisa. The latter is now well known as the first Marathi poetess. Chakradhar spoke to his disciples not only on the great philosophical problems but also on the daily conduct of life. He chalked out for them a path of simple austerity and vigorous discipline. He won a deep loyalty from them, which has been handed down from generation to generation.

The Mahanubhav writers have left a rich treasure of Marathi prose and verse. They rejected Sanskrit knowingly, for theirs was a religion for the common people. When Keshoba wanted to render the Master's sermons into Sanskrit verse, Nagdev said to him: "Do not do so, O Keshava! the common devotee

of my Master will be deprived of his teachings by that." The Mahanubhavs worshipped Lord Krishna, Dattatray and the three Mahanubhav founders, chief of whom was Chakradhar. Their most sacred books are : *Lila-charitra* giving the life-story of Chakradhar, and *Govind Prabhu Charitra*, both of them written by Mhai Bhat. *Lila-charitra* was written in about A.D. 1286. It is a work deeply imbued with devotion for the Master and records his travels and sayings, parables and sermons on the daily conduct of life. The *Siddhanta Sutras* collected by Keshoba make up a work of similar nature. Both are written in a simple and direct prose. Chakradhar did not write a single line himself. But the directness and chastity of his style of speaking was imbibed by his disciples. Wherever he went he gave exposition of his philosophy in parables or in directly illuminating stories. These reminiscences were recorded after he passed away by Mhai Bhat in *Lila-charitra* and by Keshoba in *Sutra-path* and *Drishtanta-path*. *Smriti-sthal* is a collection of the reminiscences of Nagdev, the chief disciple and successor of Chakradhar, and of many other prominent disciples.

The poetic works of Mahanubhav writers consist of seven long poems running into hundreds of verses in the *owi* metre. Four of them — *Vachchha-haran*,

Rukmini-swayamwar, Shishupal-wadh, and *Uddhaw-Gita* – are based on the life of Lord Krishna. *Uddhaw-Gita* and *Dnyan-prabodh* are philosophical, and *Saihyadri-varnan* and *Ridhdhipur-varnan* describe the homelands and sacred places of the Mahanubhavs with deep strains of the memories about the founders. Mahadaisa, the woman disciple, chose a different metre – the *dhawala,* which was a kind of song. The *dhawalas* are full of simple devotional ardour and celebrate the story of Rukmini's Swayamwar. She is also believed to have written another long poem.

Mahanubhav literature is still a subject of research and controversy. For centuries there had been a deep prejudice against this sect in Maharashtra, and a mutual distrust too. Then, these works had been rendered into code-scripts by later Mahanubhavs apparently owing to social and religious persecution from orthodox Hindus. It was partly because of this that their literature remained unknown all these years, but to it and to the devotion of the Mahanubhavs is due the credit of preserving the texts in such an uninterpolated form. Some select Marathi scholars have devoted years of study in deciphering them, fixing their chronology, discovering material about the social and religious life of the

time, and in spelling out the sect's philosophical concepts.

The last years of the Yadav period were of great material prosperity on the one hand and social and religious decadence on the other. The upper classes led empty, luxurious lives, occupied with ritualism under the garb of religion. Orthodoxy ruled supreme. The pundits considered it their sacred duty to hold aloof from contamination with the lower classes. Their knowledge of the Shastras was directed solely towards depriving the masses of religious enlightenment. The Mahanubhavs represent one kind of reaction against this social atmosphere. Their sect broke through the barriers of the caste system. It treated men and women alike and granted the right of sannyas to all. These breaches of orthodoxy were like gall to the orthodox and led to a great deal of persecution of the Mahanubhavs. They were treated as outcastes, but by their perseverance and popularity among the people they gradually won recognition even in the court of the Yadavs.

Another extremely effective and powerful revolt against Hindu orthodoxy came from Dnyandev. He was one of the four children of Vitthalpant, who had abandoned his home and taken sannyas but had returned to domestic life in obedience to the order of

his Guru. His children were born after this. They were therefore looked upon as the children of a sannyasi and hence born in sin. Their parents died in misery and they themselves were treated as outcastes. They wandered from authority to religious authority in search of 'Shuddhi' or formal purification. It was this bitter experience that made both Nivrittinath and Dnyandev realize the tyranny of orthodoxy and the essence of true religion. Dnyandev loved and revered his elder brother as his Guru and with inspiration from him, he wrote his two masterpieces. His *Bhavartha-dipika,* popularly known as *Dnyaneshwari,* and his *Anubhavamrita* have been the sacred books of Maharashtra and outside for the last seven hundred years. They have been read very widely and with profound devotion. They have moulded Maratha thought and given philosophical solace to Maratha minds for seven centuries. With all this, they also represent the high-water mark of old Marathi poetry, in their profundity of thought, delicacy of diction and variety of imagery. Dnyandev represents the finest flowering of the Maratha literary and philosophical genius.

Dnyandev met orthodox Hinduism on its own ground in choosing the *Bhagawadgita* for his commentary and elucidation in the *Dnyaneshwari.* That

essence of Upanishadic philosophy was best suited to remind the degenerate society of its ideals and also to diffuse the light of Swadharma – one's own duty according to the concepts of Hinduism – amongst the masses. He chose the language of the masses and raised it to heights of literary excellence unequalled even to this day.

His works are dearly loved by scholars and also by the masses of Maharashtra. His personality is one of the most revered ones among the Maharashtrians. After he wrote his *Anubhavamrita,* he believed that he had completed his life's mission and took Samadhi in Alandi at the very young age of twenty-two. His shrine at Alandi has ever since been a holy place of pilgrimage to the people of Maharashtra.

When Dnyaneshwar propounded the equality of classes in the eyes of God and especially through Bhakti, on the authority of the *Gita,* a wave of the thrill of freedom went through Maharashtra. Saintly singers sprang up in all castes and communities. Namdev, a tailor who was already propagating the Bhakti Marga in Pandharpur, became a disciple of Dnyaneshwar. Savta–a gardener, Gora–a potter, Narhari–a goldsmith, Chokha–a Mahar, all of them extolled and celebrated the Bhagwat Dharma propounded by Dnyandev. They sang of the equality

of classes, of their longing to see God, of the realization of God through pure love and Bhakti. A great devotional Movement arose called the Warkari Panth under the leadership of Namdev.

However, the Brahmin and caste orthodoxy was too securely ensconced in its privileged position to comprehend the challenge thrown by Dnyaneshwar. It was criminally blind in its smug complacency and decadent pursuit of pleasure and remained unconcerned even to the far more serious challenge of the Muslim invasion of their land. In A.D. 1293 Alauddin Khilji marched against Devgiri, the capital of the Yadavs, the dynasty ended in A.D. 1318, and the Bahamani period began in Maharashtra.

The Bahamani Period

It was the saints' poetry of devotion and spiritual ideals that protected the flame of Hindu religion in Maharashtra and maintained the continuity of Marathi literature during this period. Under the sway of the Muslims, court life and court language underwent a rapid change. Conversion to Islam took place on an alarming scale. Even princes and sardars succumbed to it. Tyranny and persecution in the name of the religion of the rulers became the order

of the day. The masses were terrorised. But the greater the anarchy and the violence against religion, language and literature, the more passionately did the saints cling to their God. Some Mahanubhav pundits like Navarasa Narayan, Elhan, and Chalhan maintained a steady flow of religious and philosophical works in prose and verse. Religion provided the only armour for the Maratha mind against general persecution under the Muslim rule. Apart from this, the tale of the sixteenth century is a sad one.

The works of Eknath are the finest efflorescence of this religious trend. He was the greatest of the successors of Dnyandev, deeply imbued with the study of the *Dnyaneshwari*. He wrote a commentary on the eleventh Skandha of the *Bhagawata Purana* which is profoundly honoured by spiritual seekers; but even as Dnyandev gave a new orientation to Maratha thought through his commentary on the *Gita*, Eknath propagated the Bhagwat Dharma through his commentary on the *Bhagawata*. It was a corollary of the philosophical position of Dnyandev — the position of a new humanism. It is this neo-humanism which forms the basis of the deep-bred sense of equality in Maharashtra, which was later moulded by Ramdas into the idea of 'Maharashtra Dharma'. Eknath spoke of the religion of Bhagwat

Dharma as *Ananda-wana-bhuwana.* He was confident that the Bhagwat Dharma was capable of creating a 'kingdom of Joy'. The essence of the Bhagwat Dharma is Bhakti (devotion). Eknath spread the spirit of Bhakti among the high and low by his grave yet mellifluous words in the people's own language. He also rendered the *Ramayana* and many other Puranic stories into Marathi. He has done yet another invaluable service to the culture and literature of Maharashtra – by producing, after a thorough editing, an authoritative version of the *Dnyaneshwari,* which during the three hundred years since it was written, had become corrupted with many wrong readings.

Eknath also wrote several small narratives and *abhangas* and some semi-prose works of a type called *bharud.* He was not only a saint and a great poet, but also an active social reformer. All his efforts were directed towards checking the onslaught and the corrupting influence of the prevalent religious persecution. Swaraj was lost. He strained every nerve to help retain Swadharma at least. All his literary work is inspired with the object of creating a feeling of oneness and equality among the various orders of the Hindus.

Eknath was imitated and followed by a number

of minor poets who wrote in his strain. Dasopant was the most noteworthy of them. A voluminous writer of facile verse, he is skilled in the use of anecdotes, allegories, and metaphors. His work is imbued with the consciousness of the expressive power of Marathi as against Sanskrit.

Transition to the Maratha Period

This brings us to the end of the Bahamani period. It was a period of slavery and religious persecution and decadence, but the pure streams of Marathi literature and of religious and philosophical verse flowed on unhampered. The legacy of Dnyaneshwar was cherished and cultivated by his successors. The spirit of this new Marathi literature spread widely — even to the remotest corners of Maharashtra, e.g. Goa which was under the Portuguese, and beyond, e.g. to the jahgirs of Shahaji in Tanjore. A specimen of this is afforded by the *Krista-Puran* of Father Stephens who came to India in 1579. He is the first Englishman known to have visited India and the only Englishman to write a poem of considerable length in any of the Indian languages. For all his studies in European culture and his Latin training, he surrendered to the charm of the freshly developing Marathi language. "Like a jewel among

pebbles," he wrote, "like a sapphire among jewels, is, the excellence of the Marathi tongue. Like the jasmine among blossoms, the musk among perfumes, the peacock among birds, the zodiac among the stars, is Marathi among languages." His work is deeply imbued with the influence of Dnyaneshwar in its style and diction.

A large number of semi-worldly writers bring up the rear of the sixteenth century. Mukteshwar, the grandson of Eknath, represents this vein. He carries on the tradition of his grandfather in devoting himself to narrating, in the language of the people, the stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. But he is more of the earth earthy, delighting in the glories of a luxury-loving, worldly existence. His narratives, however, are specially interesting as an index of the spirit of the times in a peculiar way. They are full of a strange kind of anachronisms. His heroes from the Puranas like Dushyanta face enemies and tyrants of the sixteenth century Maharashtra. The exploits of the Pandavas include the conquest of the Muslims and even the English. He tries to present the ideal of a good king and a noble aristocracy before a Maharashtra which lay prostrate before the conquerors. The age was getting ready, as it were, for the rise

of Shivaji, the liberator.

The dawn of the seventeenth century saw the quintessence of the devotional school in the *abhangas* of Tukaram. His extreme otherworldliness has given rise to innumerable stories of his thriftlessness and has made him a dearly-loved personality. But the finest feature of his devotional poems is their intense lyricism. Tukaram speaks to his God with an intensity of personal emotion which is unparalleled in Marathi poetry. His diction naturally attains directness and lucidity. He had little claim to learning or philosophy. Spontaneity and sincerity are the mainsprings of his work. But this itself made him the finest example of the Warkari Panth – he is indeed the crown of that 'Panth'. His crystalline humanity and humility made him the greatest leader of the devotional school and a fine influence upon it. Under his banner gathered all castes and creeds. His *abhangas* found a path to all corners of Maharashtra. He was a great unifying influence among all ranks of the people of Maharashtra, the best and perhaps the last exponent of the Bhagwat Dharma. This consolidation of the masses under a religious banner went a long way towards the creation of a helpful atmosphere for Shivaji's efforts for the liberation of the Hindus in Maharashtra.

The high-water mark of this urge for liberation arising out of a profound consciousness of the need of national re-organization is to be found in the work of the great saint Ramdas. He was himself a sannyasi, but he was keenly conscious of the degeneration into which the people and their religion had fallen. He trained his disciples with the definite objective of bringing about a religious awakening, established Maths (i.e. monasteries), and rebuilt old temples that had fallen into disuse or been destroyed by the Islamic conquerors. But, chief of all, he wrote volumes of verses for the spiritual guidance of the people. His *Dasbodh* is the Bible not only of his disciples, but of millions of people in Maharashtra. It combines deep religious feeling with profound practical wisdom and social consciousness. It is written with a directness and simplicity that often verge on the prosaic. There is a good deal of other minor verse attributed to Ramdas.

Ramdas is well known as the Guru, i.e. spiritual guide and philosopher of Shivaji. His literary work as well as founding of the Ramdasi order of his disciples and organization of Maths are sufficient proofs of the synthesis of the elements of religious and social consciousness in his genius.

The tradition of philosophic interpretation set by Dnyaneshwar and the elaborate decorativeness of the style of Mukteshwar was carried on in the days of Shivaji by Waman Pandit. He appears to have remained unaffected by the political events of the day. He lived in a world of metaphysics and the Puranas. He brought to bear his fine sense of the decorativeness of words upon the stories in the Puranas and wrote akhyanas, i.e. long narrative poems, in a high-flown, alliterative style. He also wrote his own commentary on the *Gita* and claimed for it a more correct interpretation of it than that of Dnyandev, as is evidenced by the title *Yathartha-dipika* (यथार्थ दीपिका). It differs from the *Dnyaneshwari*, which is called *Bhavartha-dipika* (भावार्थ दीपिका) not only in pedantry and affectation, but also in its philosophical position. It emphasises the Dnyana Marga or the Way of Knowledge instead of Bhakti Marga or the Way of Devotion in Dnyandev's work. But *Yathartha-dipika* has never been able to command the same love and devotion from the people that the *Dnyaneshwari* has always received.

The works of Waman Pandit represent two strains that are widely different. *Yathartha-dipika* forms one type representing his intellectualised

spirituality, asceticism and otherworldliness. His akhyanas like *Gajendra-moksha, Sita Swayamwar,* and *Venu Sudha* are vivid, picturesque and elaborate. These strains are so different that scholars have tried to make out a case that there were more than one person of the name of Waman Pandit. But there appears to be very little room for such a conjecture.

Other poets like Nagesh and Vitthal and others brought up the rear of the poetry of the days of Shivaji. There was a large group of imitators of Waman Pandit. The poetry of the Ramdas group also created a school of its own — much more so because Ramdas founded a sect for the moral and religious renaissance of Maharashtra. Missionaries of this sect went as far as Tanjore, the jahgir of Shahaji, where by now Vyankoji, the step-brother of Shivaji, was ruling. The language of his court was naturally Marathi. Raghunath Pandit, a noteworthy poet, belonged by creed to the Ramdasi Panth, but in style he belongs to the school of Waman Pandit. He wrote a rich verse, devoted to akhyanas like those of Waman. His *Nala-Damayanti Swayamwar* is well known. Another Tanjore poet of a later date is Samraj. He belonged to the days of Shahu, the son of Vyankoji, under whose patronage the first Marathi plays were written.

The works of Ramdas represent the apotheosis of the high seriousness and practical idealism of the Marathas during the days of the establishment of their Swaraj. But this period also brought to them the thrill of the successful foundation of this Swaraj. They were filled with a sense of confidence and pride in the exploits of their heroes and also with a rich joy of earthly pleasure. This aspect of their life found expression in a new type of poetry in the Powadas and Lavnis. The poets who wrote and sang these were known as 'Shahirs'. They recited their compositions to the accompaniment of extremely simple musical instruments — a *daph* (small drum) to keep time and a *tuntuna* (one-stringed instrument). The poet, and his chorus who repeated the refrain, held audiences of thousands spell-bound by their high-pitched voices and spirited enunciation. The Powada is a form of heroic poetry, brisk in movement and vivid in diction, eminently suited to describe the lightning warfare and selfless valour of the Marathas. Many of them were written by eye-witnesses or contemporaries of great events of those days. The first of these is on the meeting of Shivaji and Afzalkhan, written by Agnidas and the second on Tanaji's conquest of the fort Simhagarh written by Tulsidas. Agnidas wrote in a direct and

dynamic style while Tulsidas is more elaborate and polished. The first Powada is believed to have been sung before Shivaji and Jijabai, after the great event of the liquidation of Afzalkhan.

The days of Shivaji also witnessed the development of Marathi prose. Mahanubhav works, as we saw, continued through the centuries. A form of historical prose, called Bakhars from the Persian word *khabar,* had also come into existence during the Yadav period. Marathi Bakharkars described the achievements of other rulers also like Malikambar or the Battle of Rakshastagdi, which struck the knell of the kingdom of Vijayanagar. Father Stephens' prose introduction to his *Krista-Puran* is also noteworthy for its style. The prose of Shivaji's period is to be found mostly in valuable letters and administrative communications. The oldest Bakhar of these days is the *Wakanavis Bakhar* which gives an account of the life of Shivaji in 96 sections. It has formed the basis of most later biographies of Shivaji. Another independent account of the life of Shivaji is the *Sabhasadi Bakhar* written at the behest of Rajaram by Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad in about 1697. It is based on the author's personal knowledge of Shivaji's life and is also endowed with a high quality of style. One of the finest specimens of such historical prose

is afforded by the *Adnya-patra* of Ramchandra Pant Amatya, the minister of Sambhaji, son of the founder of Kolhapur State. It is instinct with mature political wisdom and is a fine specimen of the polite prose of the day.

The Peshwa Period

The years after Shivaji were difficult times. It was only the loyalty of the people and the courage of his chosen followers that helped Rajaram in somehow saving the Maratha kingdom. Disintegration threatened and the mainsprings of literature seemed to run dry. But the efforts of Rajaram and his followers brought about a stability which led to the security and glory of the days of the first three Peshwas. None of these remarkable statesmen had a very peaceful time. They were continually harassed by onslaughts from outside and rifts within the kingdom. Their own ambitions added to the distractions. But during this period, the central parts of Maharashtra had greater security than ever before and Poona, the capital of the Peshwas, became a centre of learning, of a typically Maharashtrian culture and of luxurious social life.

Krishna Dayarnav and Shridhar were the leading poets of the early days of the Peshwas. The

quiet flow of the philosophical verse of the first and the deeply devotional narratives of the second were widely appreciated in Maharashtra. Shridhar's *Ramvijay, Harivijay,* and *Pandavpratap* are still read devoutly by orthodox Hindus, and his *Shivalilamrita* still forms a part of the daily prayer of hundreds of Maratha women. But the sense of security and cultured ease of the Peshwa period are best reflected in the poetical works of Moropant, or Mayur Pandit as he is known in learned parlance. He enjoyed the patronage of the Baramatikars, a family into which the Peshwas had married. He had received a thorough training in the Sanskrit classics and religious texts. He was an adept in the use of classical diction and prosody. His main vocation was that of a Puranik, i.e. of reading out verse stories from the Puranas in temples, elucidating and commenting upon them, before the men and women, young and old, high and low, who would throng to the temples. He was naturally inspired to compose verse stories to embellish the Purana episodes in a style attractive and yet within the grasp of such mixed audiences. He brought to bear upon them all his learning and also his gifts of perspicacity and decorativeness. It is strange that this eighteenth century Marathi poet reveals all the outstanding characteristics of eighteenth

century English classicism. He spent all his wit upon narrating what 'Oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.' He re-narrated the story of Krishna in his erudite *Krishna-vijay,* and the stories from the *Bhagawata* in his *Mantra-Bhagwat.* He avoided metaphysical discussion and concentrated on the story element, giving even skilful touches of character portrayal. He retold the chronicle of *Hariwamsha* and, not the least, he is believed to have written one hundred and eight versions of the story of Rama — some with different narrators in different situations and some in different metres. Ninety of these are available. Some of them, like the one with Sita as narrator surrounded by the happy company of sisters-in-law and friends after her return from banishment, and known as *Sita-Ramayan,* show great ingenuity of invention. Moropant was also fond of what is known as *Chitrabandha,* or poems in patterns of initial letters and other kinds.

The favourite metre of Moropant was the *arya-vritta.* He infused new life into the old Sanskrit metre and gave it a wonderful finish and variety. His works would easily come to some lakhs of *aryas.* He also wrote fine *shlokas* in various metres.

Ingenuity in narration was the forte of Moropant, but that was not his sole achievement. In his later

days he wrote some short *stotras* or hymns that have made him even more popularly known and read than have his narrative works. Such are his *Ganga-prarthana, Kashi-stuti,* and others. Among these shorter poems are his *Kekavali* and *Samshay-ratna-mala.* They evince lyricism of a high order. They are much simpler and chaste in style, though possessed with the poet's characteristic ingenuity. They are his personal prayers and invocations of God. Generations of modern Marathi minds have been brought up in their childhood on the poetical works of Moropant. His *arya* has resounded in every well-versed middle class Maratha house. He has built up the language by giving it a new stature and dignity, a new range and subtlety of expression.

Moropant was naturally surrounded and followed by a plethora of poets using the *arya* metre and imitating him in other ways.

The rise of the Peshwas brought about a fresh efflorescence of Powadas and Lavnis too. A host of Shahirs arose to celebrate the exploits of Bajirao and Madhaorao and later the tragedy of Narayanrao. Honaji Bala, Sagan Bhau, Anant Phandi, Ram Joshi, Prabhakar and so many others form this galaxy. They gave vent to the thrill of the Marathas in the reborn glory of the Peshwa court in choice and rich diction.

They presented vivid pictures of the Maratha Sardar in his war glory and in the Lavnis they gave a free and robust expression to his love of pleasure. They developed a fine craftsmanship in music and colourfulness of words. The stream of orthodox, philosophic and erudite poetry continued steadily in this age too. It kept up the classical tradition. It even yielded a richer harvest than ever before in the works of Moropant. But the Shahirs were the poets of the people. They sang of the loves and longings of the Sardar's lady, of the rich preparations that she made for her lover or her husband, of her anxiety at his going on military campaign after the 'Dasara' festival, of her pleadings with him. They sang not only of the rich enjoyments of the Sardar, but also of his refusal to be tempted into delaying his departure, of his pride and his loyalty to his lord and the State.

As is natural with the Indian mind, Shahir poetry was also used for Vedanta and allegorical presentation of philosophic problems in the later days of the Peshwas. Metaphysical riddles, exposition of the relation of Atma, the individual soul and Paramatma, the Universal Soul, or of the devotee and God, in the amorous fashion of the Lavni, became very common. It was, however, obvious that degeneration had set

in. Metaphysical acumen was getting blunt. Devotional urge was on the wane and the vitality and vigour for the soldier's life were also getting lost. Literature was settling down to the leisurely luxuriousness and erudite ornateness of the later days of the Peshwas.

Marathi biographical verse dates back to the days of Dnyandev. It centres chiefly round the lives of saints in the early days. Prose works of this kind date back to the beginning of Mahanubhav literature. In verse, the life of Dnyandev written by Sachchidananda Baba, a contemporary of Dnyandev, is the first noteworthy attempt of the kind. It was followed by the lives of Namdev, Eknath, Dasopant, Ramdas, Tukaram, and others written by various writers. There are a few autobiographies also. Most of the attempts at biography are rudimentary. They do not show much care or authenticity in material. Many also verge on the marvellous. However, this type of writing acquired a literary form and flavour only with the works of Mahipati, a poet of the days of the Peshwas. In his life of Tukaram, he took the trouble of reading original sources and collecting information from relatives of the saint. He also wrote the lives of a number of other saints. His *Bhakta-lilamrita* is still read very widely in simple orthodox Maratha

homes. These works, easy to imitate, brought forth a crop of followers.

Peshwa prose continued and developed the patterns of the early Marathi prose. The Peshwas had Bakharkars in their employ. Well-written accounts of various contemporary events, narratives of historical events of the days of Shivaji, and collection and rewriting of old Bakhars continued. The first of the Bakhars of the days of the Peshwas is the one known as *Shiva-Digvijay* written in 1718. There are five Bakhars on the tragic event of the Battle of Panipat. The best of them is known as the *Bakhar of Bhausaheb*. It was written in chaste, poignant prose, with vividness of description and great emotive power. The autobiography of Nana Phadnavis is the first of its kind and a gem of the prose of this period. Many Bakhars were written under the auspices of the various Maratha Sardars like the Bhonslas.

A bird's-eye view of the long period from the beginning of Marathi literature in the Yadav era to the times of the Peshwas would easily reveal that like most other Indian literatures, it was mainly concerned with the propagation of religious ideas and philosophical exposition. Poetry devoted itself solely to this. It was the only armour for the Maratha mind during the onslaught of Muslim rulers and their religion.

When kings and warriors failed to protect them, and the administrators went over to the conquerors, the morale of the people was maintained by this religious and metaphysical poetry. It was the only power which not only kept alive the tradition of the language but also enriched it. It was the sole repository of their thought and culture. When better days dawned, it spread itself out with greater assurance and embraced the material life of the people in the poetry of erudite pundits and the Shahirs. Saints, pundits and Shahirs are thus the three major types of poets till the days of the Peshwas. Marathi prose began as early as the days of the Mahanubhavs. It soon acquired power of description and exposition. In the Bahamani period, the language underwent a strong Persian influence. The vocabulary, especially the administrative, became predominantly Persian, but a chastening took place during the period of Shivaji. Prose of the period of the Peshwas as found in Bakhars, informative books on astrology, medicine, horse-lore, administration and other such subjects reveals its growing power. All these trends, however, suffered a great set-back with the third Battle of Panipat.

THE MODERN PERIOD

Part I	..	1818–1874
Part II	..	1874–1920
Part III	..	1920–1947

The decay of the Maratha power set in with the Battle of Panipat (1761). The process was completed by the Treaty of Bassein with the British (1818). The vitality of the people had been completely drained off during this long process of decline ranging over fifty years. Society disintegrated, no centre of devotion and loyalty remained. Traditions were lost and all the currents of literature dried up. It was a lifeless Maharashtra that fell into the hands of the British.

It must be said to the credit of the early British administrators that they followed a culturally benevolent and educationally sound policy from 1818 to 1854. Men with a fairly humanistic approach and rare acumen like Elphinstone and Malcolm were at the helm of affairs in the Bombay Presidency. They believed in the vital importance of the language of the people even to the extent of urging its use as the medium of instruction. Elphinstone encouraged the old-fashioned pundits and shastris, and got them together under his patronage. The first Marathi grammar and the first Marathi dictionary were compiled by them

in 1829. The Bombay Native Education Society and the Dakshina Prize Committee were formed. A stream of translations of books of various kinds and on various subjects followed. It was a new kind of Marathi no doubt. It had broken away from its rich ancient tradition. Indeed, all traditions were forgotten. The Englishmen laboured under the impression that they were giving the first systematic basis to an undeveloped language, and the Maratha people themselves were still too dazed by the change to remind themselves of their heritage. Yet the credit of correct educational perspective must be given to these early administrators. The history of education and literature in India would perhaps have been very different if this policy had continued. But what is known as Macaulay's Minute of 1854 brought about a great change, and a new system of education was established in India. It made it still more difficult for the Maratha people to revive their traditions or even to be aware of their heritage. They ploughed the barren furrough of imitation and translation of tenth-rate English works. The Christian missionaries contributed a good deal to this kind of literature. Under their influence new forms of literature, characteristic of the West, were created in Marathi and the older forms underwent a metamorphosis. The form

and nature of poetry changed. The Novel and the Essay came into existence.

In the long run, however, even this process of the spread of education had its own beneficial effect. A new consciousness was created – at least among some of those educated in the new fashion. A keen sense of self-respect, love for their literature, and pride in their own tradition were created in the minds of those very persons who were sought to be fed upon a foreign lore and foreign literature. Such were the pioneers who established various periodicals round about 1840 and made great efforts to re-orient the Maratha mind. Balshastri Jambhekar started the daily *Darpan* as early as 1832 and a periodical *Digdarshan* in 1837; in 1840 Mahajan started his *Prabhakar* and Joshi Pavaskar his *Dnyan Chandroday*. These writers gave a new turn to thought, roused public opinion to a new consciousness of their heritage, warned the people about the true import of missionary activities, and tried to direct all efforts towards reform and revival of their own culture. Krishnashastri Chiplunkar, who started the paper *Vichar-lahari* in 1852, Vishnubuwa Brahmachari, a spirited defender of Hinduism, and Gopal Hari Deshmukh alias 'Lokahitawadi', a keen critic of the ignorance and lethargy of his people, enriched this

trend further. These writers laid the foundations of Marathi journalism very securely. Their keen sense of self-respect and awareness of their heritage, their devotion to learning and zeal for reform combined with a consciousness of the failings of their people made them eminently capable of not only laying the foundation of journalism, but of heralding a new age in Maharashtra. It will be convenient to consider the literature of this age according to different forms.

Modern Marathi Prose

The Essay

Pioneers of modern Maharashtra like Jambhekar, Agarkar, Chiplunkar, and Lokahitawadi used the essay as their chief instrument of bringing about a social change. They made the beginnings of a new prose and brought the essay into Marathi. Their efforts yielded rich fruit in the writings of Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. His *Nibandhamala* started publication in 1874. He saw that the urgent need of the hour was to rouse the people to a sense of self-respect. The fledgeling graduates that the new anglicised universities were turning out were left totally in darkness about their own traditions. They imbibed a great admiration for all that was Western, learnt to

look down upon all Hindu ways and ideas, and took pride in imitating the British. Vishnushastri launched a severe and persistent attack upon these tendencies. Sometimes he was one-sided and even irrational, sometimes he was harshly unfair to keen reformers like Lokahitawadi, who stressed only the ignorance and superstition into which the people had fallen and directed their attention to the great things that had to be urgently learnt from the rulers. But Chiplunkar's satire and invective, the learned dignity of his style, his range of information and thorough knowledge of Sanskrit and Marathi literature thrilled the contemporary reader. His articles were like a clarion call to somnolent orthodoxy and also to the newly educated minds, which were slipping unawares into a deep servitude to the foreigners. Krishnashastri, his father, wrote in a quiet and restrained style. But the articles of Vishnushastri are full of militant vigour and urgency. He was, however, in no way a reactionary or obscurantist. He urged the adoption of a scientific attitude and wrote on the development of language and literature, on a proper perspective regarding religion, in fact on almost every problem confronting the contemporary cultural life. He stopped publishing the *Nibandhamala* after a few years, when he founded the *Kesari* and the

Mahratta newspapers which later attained all-India importance in the hands of Lokamanya Tilak. But in its life of a few years, *Nibandhamala* rendered such service that the modern period of Marathi literature is rightly considered to begin from the date of its publication. It fully deserves to be known as the corner-stone of modern Marathi prose. The versatility of thought and variety of style ranging from a rich sonorousness to scathing sarcasm and the rapier-like wit, purity of diction and finely-welded structure of its essays have naturally accorded to it that important place.

Chiplunkar's great contemporary Agarkar was not less militant and patriotic but he was more deeply influenced by the best in Western liberalism. He imbibed its spirit of individualism and its specially dominant ideas of the emancipation of women. He directed his energies towards social reform rather than towards creating consciousness of the current slavery. He was equally a master of invective, but his approach was always rational and progressive. He wrote fearlessly on the need of sweeping away untouchability, on the spread of education – especially among women, on widow-remarriage, on reformed ways of dress and even on socialism and birth-control in those days of ignorance and prejudice. He had

to suffer intensely for this, but he did not flinch from his mission. All that he wrote is characterised by a crystal-clear sincerity and reasoned emotion. His style is chaste and dignified. His thought is fearlessly original but always schooled, and weighed with the knowledge of philosophy. He was the first of a brilliant line of rationalist social reformers and intellectuals of Maharashtra — a group consisting of stalwarts like justice Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Jyotiba Phule, the first of the non-Brahmin writers of the modern age, also belongs to the group of social reformers, but is in a class by himself. He was a great advocate of the equality of classes, of the education of women, of the need of a re-orientation of scriptures and religious customs. He was the first to raise his voice for the emancipation of the depressed classes and began his efforts as early as 1841. He wrote in a style of his own, which was perhaps not as chaste and polished as that of Chiplunkar or Agarkar, but could equal their power of invective and satire.

Chiplunkar founded a powerful school of thought and a group of essayists and monographers followed him, consisting of writers like M. S. Gole, V. K. Rajwade, S. M. Paranjpe, and C. V. Vaidya. Each

had his own individual style of expression, and even choice of subjects. Rajwade and Vaidya, for instance, concentrated on historical research, S. M. Paranjpe on spirited political writing. They also turned their attention towards literary criticism. All strains of the essay found in the writings of Chiplunkar were developed by these writers in the decades that followed.

The greatest of this line was Lokamanya Tilak. He was the greatest in sweep and depth of thought, in his versatility, his closely reasoned style, even in the comprehensiveness and volume of his writings. His leading articles in the *Kesari* were written for the hour but are a lasting treasure of Marathi literature. They gave a power and a seasoned form to the essay. He wrote in a direct, unornamented style which vividly reflects his integrity and straightforwardness. This was indeed the Golden Age of Marathi prose.

This type of informative and argumentative essay continues up to date. Sawarkar's impassioned prose. N. C. Kelkar's versatility, V. M. Joshi's philosophical equipoise have nourished and developed its trend. Jawdekar, Lakshmanshastri Joshi and a host of other learned writers wield this powerful organ of thought with great effect and usefulness. Some Gandhian thinkers like Acharya Vinobaji and Dada Dharma-

dhikari have given it a different depth and simplicity.

A new trend in this old type of essay was created by S. K. Kolhatkar in the early years of the twentieth century. He began writing humorous articles under the caption *Sudamyache Pohe* which were later collected in a volume called *Sahitya Battishi.* In their skilful synthesis of rollicking humour and keen social satire, they are the first of their kind in Marathi. Kolhatkar seems to have learnt a good deal from the Addisonian method of creating humorous characters and placing them in comic situations. But his 'Sudama' and 'Bandunana' and others are by no means a mere imitation of the Addisonian Roger De Coverley. His criticism of Hindu festivities and rituals is much too keen and effective for the Addisonian pattern. He wrote in a free and hearty and keenly intellectual style. These essays laid securely the foundations of Marathi humour, which was till then balancing itself hesitatingly on either stories from ancient sources of folk-lore or translations from English. With the advent of Kolhatkar's humorous essays a stream of humour was opened up, which has become an outstanding characteristic of Marathi literature. The tradition was more than maintained by his successor Ram Ganesh Gadkari in similar essays, and is being carried on in those of C. V. Joshi.

Limaye, Tamhankar and others up to date. The youngest of these humorists is P. L. Deshpande with a couple of volumes already to his credit.

The post-Tilak age in Maharashtra is in many ways the age of mediocrity. But it is also an age of fine craftsmanship, sophistication and delicate emotionalism. It is the age of the creation of many new and delicate varieties of older forms. The short literary essay and the short story are the most outstanding of these. Although the old type of informative essays continues up to date, round about 1925 the short essay or the literary essay came into being. The sweep and verve of thought found in the essay of the days of Chiplunkar, Agarkar, and Tilak is attenuated to a witty personalness, a cultivation of grace and lucidity and the choice of common subjects of everyday middle class life. N. S. Phadke and V. S. Khandekar are the first writers of this kind of modern essay, cast in the mould of English essayists like A. G. Gardiner, Chesterton and others. Wit and humour, delicacy of sentiment, a feeling for Nature, an insight into the significance of common things characterise this essay. The older essay sought to convince, to propagate ideas, to establish theories. It considered the pros and cons, it sought to be comprehensive and conclusive. The modern essay is different in

its interest, nature, and objective. It reflects only a whim, expresses a mood. It seeks to surprise by the revelation of the uncommon in the commonplace. Some of the modern writers depend on sheer playful fancy, others reach a deeper level of sympathetic interpretation of the apparently commonplace. But they are all graceful and delicate in style, rich in the expression of personality and yet wide in appeal. Along with Phadke and Khandekar, many others like Anant Kanekar, Dandekar, Sant, Joshi, Dodke, Shantaram have enriched this form. It is one of the most popular and also the most modernised forms. The humorous essay of P. L. Deshpande and others is a contemporary to this type and belongs to it in technique and approach.

Other Forms of Prose

The essay, however, is only one of the forms of Marathi prose. Philosophical treatises, books on social and physical sciences, literary and historical research, biography and autobiography, were being written in good numbers and with improving quality throughout the period. Lokamanya Tilak's *Gita-rahasya* may be described as one of the best representatives of such books. Different series of publications in various parts of Maharashtra, like the *Sulabh*

Granthamala in which some of the scholarly books of Acharya Jawdekar have been published, the *Nava-Bharat Granthamala* which extends over subjects like Ancient Indian Educational System, Rajya-Shastra, History of the Rajputs, Development of the Child Mind and others – such series together with other efforts of a number of publishers are rendering great service to the spread of this 'Literature of Knowledge'.

Historical writing is a forte of the Maratha mind. It began with the translation of Grant Duff's *The History of the Marathas* made by Capin and Sane. But the first original work is to be found in 1867 in the critical articles of young Nilkanthrao Kirtane on Grant Duff's treatment of Maratha History. Kirtane continued his work in editing and publishing the *Chitnis Bakhar*. Justice Ranade and Dr. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar were great and thorough students of history. Their writings are in English, but they greatly helped the progress and interest in history and historical research. A good deal of historical material in the form of old records and letters was collected in the years that followed, and was published in a series running into more than a dozen volumes called *Marathyanchya Itihasachi Sadhane*. The prince of Marathi historical writing is G. S. Sardesai

with his many volumes on the Moghul, the Maratha and the British periods. Many young writers are straining themselves to keep up this tradition.

Biography

Biographical writing in prose, as we have seen before, was as ancient as the earliest Mahanubhav texts. In verse, it is as old as Mahipati, to say nothing of the tentative efforts of his predecessors. But like many other branches of modern Marathi prose, biographical writings in the British period began with the establishment of the Dakshina Prize Committee and its efforts for getting new types of educative books published. These early biographical sketches were mostly elementary. Many were about foreign worthies, written with a view to educating the Maratha people and hence rather crudely didactic. They hardly aimed at creating a central figure or giving an idea of the personality of the subject. But some of them like *Ramdas Swami* by Chaubal and *Vishnubuwa Brahmachari* by Ajrekar are noteworthy. After this, biographies of various types came to be written. These were the very short and simple sketches, mostly of foreign worthies, by Vinayak Kondadev Oka, and the patriotic sketches of Maratha heroes by R. V. Tikekar alias 'Dhanurdhari'.

But the life of Dr. Johnson written by Vishnushastri Chiplunkar set up a different standard. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 gave a further fillip to the development of political thought and interest in freedom movements elsewhere. *Garibaldi* by N. C. Kelkar and *Mazzini* by Sawarkar are illustrious examples of lives of such political heroes. Lives of literary men and saints also became the order of the day. These reveal a growing consciousness of the need of evaluating facts and sifting them from superstition. The same was the case with historical biographies. Some skill in character portrayal and creation of personality was also palpable. The biographies were no longer merely informative and moralistic. B. A. Bhide, Pangarkar and Ajgaonkar rendered great service in the line of lives of saints. This work is being carried on, on a more rationalistic and scientifically historical basis, by writers of today like N. R. Phatak, Dr. Pendse and Dr. Kolte. The biographies of the earlier years of the twentieth century show a distinct progress in the handling of historical material. The attention of biographers was also directed towards contemporary figures. Lokamanya Tilak naturally proved a worthy and favourite subject. The voluminous and well-documented biography written by

N. C. Kelkar, the great lieutenant and follower of the Lokamanya, is a monument to the greatness of the leader, as well as to the thorough knowledge of contemporary affairs of the writer. It is almost a history of the time of which Lokamanya Tilak was the central figure.

With the widening of the horizons of thought in the twentieth century, the range of subjects of biography has increased. The vision of the biographers now reaches all lands and all times. Its informative scope has increased, but it cannot be said that the art has reached greater heights or depths. Attempts have also been made towards a new type of biography of modern literary men, as for instance in Khanolkar's book on Madhaorao Patwardhan. But nothing has yet been achieved of the kind or the level of the biographical writing of an Emil Ludwig or Lytton Stratchey or Andre Maurois.

The field of autobiography has been less productive in quantity, but has attained high quality. Even during the Peshwa period, Nana Phadnavis wrote his autobiography which is known to be remarkable in its frankness and self-criticism. In the early days of the British, Vishnubuwa Brahmachari affixed an autobiographical sketch to his book

Vedokta Dharma Prakash. Baba Padamanji, the author of the first Marathi social novel, has also written his own life-story upto the time of his conversion to Christianity. Dadoba Pandurang, a lover of literature and grammarian of the early British days, wrote his biography which has been re-published now with a very comprehensive introduction by a present-day renowned research worker, A. K. Priyolkar. But the finest of this species is to be found in Ramabai Ranade's *Amchya Ayushyantil kahin Athvani* ('Some Memories of Our Life'). This book still stands unequalled in its crystalline reflection of a rare personality, in the subtle expression of the supreme devotion of a wife to her husband suggested in the description of various incidents and in the approach of the whole book, and in the utter simplicity and spontaneity of its style. Notable men of modern times like Maharshi Karve and Dharmanand Kosambi have added worthily to this form. But again, the next high-water mark comes from a woman writer, Lakshmibai Tilak, wife of the poet Narayan Waman Tilak. With its expanse of four graceful volumes, Lakshmibai ranges over their early life filled with the orthodoxy of the older generation, the eccentricities of her husband gifted with genius, generosity, and extreme unpracticalness, and the all-

forgiving grace of her own wonderful sense of humour and her patience. Of a very different type are the autobiographies of Sawarkar, *Purva Pithika* and *Mazya Athvani*, and his *Mazi Janmathep* ('Life Sentence'), with their powerful style, rare experience, and dispassionate yet poignant attitude. Kelkar's own life-story *Gata Goshti* is in many respects a better work than his *Tilak-charitra*. His daughter Dr. Kamalabai Deshpande has also written about her own life (*Smaran-sankhli*, 'Chain of Memories') – with its first part as delicate as a dream and its latter half clouded over by the conflicts and worries of an institution. A number of literary autobiographical sketches, like *Don Tape* by Madkholkar, *Amchin Akara Varshen* ('Our Eleven Years') by Mrs. Patwardhan, and *Karagrihachya Bhinti* ('Prison Walls') by Gore have also enriched the form. However, it must be admitted that much remains to be done, especially in the line of biography.

The Novel and the Short Story

The Novel.—The Marathi novel may be said to have just completed a century of growth. Its beginnings are to be found in the translations published before 1850 of English novels like *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Gulliver's Travels* during the period of

anglicised neo-Marathi. The first original attempt was made by Baba Padamanji in his *Yamuna Paryatan* (1857) or the 'Journeys of Yamuna'. It deals with the social problem of the condition of widows in Hindu society. It shows a fair amount of skill in characterisation and depiction of social background and is remarkable for its simple and racy style. But the Marathi readers of its day do not seem to have taken very kindly to it. This may have been due to the fact that the latter half of the book is burdened with Christian propaganda and the language too savours of the strange anglicised dialect of the early Christian missionaries.

A different trend, more deep-rooted in Marathi literary traditions, was started by a school of pundits like Halbe and Risbud. Their novels *Muktamala, Manju-ghosha, Ratna-prabha, Vasant-kokila* and others follow the pattern of Banabhatta's Sanskrit novel *Kadambari,* from which indeed the Marathi novel has taken its name. The style of these novels is highly Sanskritised. Their approach is didactic and the stories are romantic. There is little attempt at characterisation. It amounts to portrayal in sheer monochrome. The 'good' are purely good and the 'bad' are abnormally bad. The main appeal lies in a rich Sanskritised style, romantic

descriptions, and didactic sermons. These stories rendered an invaluable service to the Marathi language in maintaining its literary heritage during an age of onslaught from a hybrid, anglicised neo-Marathi. This trend cannot, however, be called a narrow puristic trend, for it incorporated within it a stream of Persian influence. Translations of Persian and Arabic stories like the *Bakhtyarnama, Hatimtai, Arabian Nights,* etc. had already appeared and influenced the taste of the Marathi reader. The craving for romantic improbabilities evinced in novels like *Manju-ghosha* and *Ratna-prabha* may be traced to such influence.

The two currents of realism and sincerity in Padamanji, and the highbrow but rich and unrealistic didacticism of the pundit school were enriched by the additional one of the historical novel. *Mochangad,* a novel about the early days of Shivaji, was written by R. B. Gunjikar in 1871. It is remarkably vivid and effective in its simplicity. But both the historical and the social novel were yet awaiting the masterly touch of a truly creative artist. They found him in Hari Narayan Apte.

The last decade of the nineteenth century was, as we have seen, an era of a great awakening in Maharashtra. It was the age of the generous liberalism

of Gokhale and Agarkar. It was also the age of the ardent nationalism of Lokamanya Tilak. The genius of Hari Narayan Apte synthesised these two powerful trends in his creative work. He wrote historical novels like *Ushahkal, Gad Aala Pan Simha Gela, Surya-grahan,* and others, which are based on the history of the Marathas and are inspired with their sense of loyalty, their daring and unity. He made skilful use of whatever historical material was available to him in those days and transmuted it into a living monument of the Maharashtra of the 17th century. At the same time, for about 40 years during 1880 to 1917, he poured forth a series of social novels that present the various aspects of Maratha middle class life of his own generation. The joys and sorrows of family life, its complexities and its simple verities, the narrowness that besets it, the selfless love and grace which redeems it are vividly portrayed in his novels like *Pan Lakshat kon Gheto, Mi, Yashwantrao Khare, Mayecha Bajar,* and others. This series which he called *Aaj Kalchya Goshti* ('Stories of Today and Yesterday') consists of about fifteen novels. These stories do not only portray Maratha social life of the day; they are infused with a social idealism which has played a significant part in moulding Maratha thought and

life. Hari Narayan also contributed richly to the development of chaste and simple Marathi style.

There arose many imitators of the Apte manner and attitude. Warerkar is one of the most eminent. His novels continue the tradition of clear picturisation of social trends and a synthesis of realism and idealism. His problems and his heroines have a modernity that is natural in most cases. But their level was not maintained by other writers of the school. They only helped this type of novel to disintegration. The deep sympathy and social insight of Hari Narayan dwindled into sentimentalism, his idealism degenerated into didacticism. A new vision, however, arose again in the field of Marathi novel with *Ragini*, the first novel of Waman Malhar Joshi. It made a fresh attempt, not only to portray and interpret the changed pattern of Maratha family life and the new social status of women, but it infused a strain of intellectuality and dignity of thought. Joshi's other two well-known novels *Sushilecha Dev* and *Indu Kale ani Sarala Bhole* are as much experiments in interpreting the idealism the philosophic beliefs, and the social revolution of a generation, as experiments in the technique of novel-writing. Dr. Ketkar was a worthy contemporary of Waman Malhar. He treated the craft of novel-

writing very lightly and took to it only as a pastime. But he used the medium successfully to place before Marathi readers many structural and inherent problems of Indian society. His early novels suffer from heaviness and a strange alienness of style. His characters too are unnatural and stiff. But he achieved vividness of characterisation and naturalness of style in *Brahman Kanya,* without sacrificing his intellectuality or his social analysis.

Round about 1920, there was great growth in the Marathi reading public. Periodicals of many kinds and of varied intellectual levels came into being and the field of fiction was also enlarged. Narayan Hari Apte – who, incidentally, is neither a relation nor the literary heir of Hari Narayan – 'Nath Madhav', Hadap, Altekar, Tuljapurkar and a number of others swelled the tide of the Marathi novel. Some enriched its variety and purposefulness, others added to its power of entertainment and popularity.

The demands of the extended reading public were supplied by a rich stream of translations too. This stream as we saw was in existence since the beginning of the Marathi novel. It was continued throughout the decades. During the earlier stages, the choice usually fell upon didactic stories in English. Later, with a growing consciousness of the other Indian

languages and the beginnings of the novel in Gujarati with *Karan Ghelo* in 1863 and in Bengali with Bankimchandra's *Durgeshnandini* in 1864, the attention of Marathi writers was turned towards these also. The first translation of Gowardhan Ram's *Saraswati Chandra* appeared in 1892 and that of Bankimchandra's *Ananda Math* in 1893. After these, writers like Wasudeo Govind Apte, Vitthal Sitaram Gurjar, and Kashinath Raghunath Mitra kept up a steady flow of translations into Marathi. The field of choice has expanded with the widening of the horizon in recent times. It has stretched over most of the major Indian languages and many European ones, chiefly through English. The greatest achievement in the field of translation from another Indian language is Warerkar's rendering of all the novels of Bankim and Sharatchandra.

In the way of influence too the Bengali novel seems to have exerted the most. Round about 1925, a good number of more or less mediocre writers came under it. The short story was perhaps influenced more than the novel. But the major stream of the Marathi novel has gone its own way.

The writers who stand foremost and set their distinctive stamp upon the Marathi novel during 1925-40 are Phadke, Deshpande, Khandekar, and

Madkholkar. Phadke believes that pleasure is the prime objective of all art. He has been a consistent upholder of the principle of 'Art for Art's Sake' and has applied himself steadily and successfully to the refinement of the technique of the Marathi novel. His novels like *Jadugar* created a new standard of technical skill. He has facility of style and considerable skill of character portrayal. He has kept a steady flow of novels since the 1920s and has by now written over thirty. He has created a variety of upper middle class characters enveloped in romantic atmosphere. In some novels like *Pravasi, Uddhar, Jhelum* there is a shadow of political or psychological problems. But it is never more than a shadow. He has created an almost overwhelming taste for escapism.

The novels of Khandekar present a contrast to those of Phadke in many respects. If Phadke has always been a conscious craftsman, aiming at pleasing his readers, Khandekar's work has been inspired by an idealism that is usually too heavy for characterisation. His style is also burdened by artificiality and decorativeness. But he has kept abreast of the modern trends of thought and is keenly conscious of their effect on contemporary Maratha life. This may be said to be his forte. His novels like *Ulka* or

Krauncha Vadh are landmarks in the history of the modern Marathi novel.

Madkholkar's first novel *Muktatma* is said to be also the first political novel in Marathi, though actually the type dates back to *Aajach* and *Karmayog* by Hari Narayan Apte. As a journalist Madkholkar has been well acquainted with current political events and the forces and personalities connected with them. He has made a profuse use of these in his stories, but his work lacks in a consistent or positive political ideology which could have vitalized these events in the novels. An urbane Sanskritised style is his outstanding achievement. His best novel *Chandanvadi* presents a finely sympathetic portrait of a Harijan girl from the industrial areas of Nagpur.

Purushottam Yashwant Deshpande's novels strike a somewhat different note from most of these. They are characterised by a strong individualistic note. They are intense in emotion and reach deeper into the recesses of individual experience. His first novel *Bandhanachya Palikade* affords a portrayal of idealistic love and the urge for individual freedom. It created quite a sensation when it was published. His later novel *Vishal Jivan* gives an analysis of the effects of political trends and events on the individual mind. This analysis in the first half of

the novel is more skilful and true than that found in most Marathi novels. An individualistic attitude and intensity of feeling is at once the strength and weakness of Deshpande's work.

Besides these, writers like Raghuvir Samant, Sane, Bokil, and Kawathekar have swelled the tide of the Marathi novel. They may not have gained as much critical notice as the former class, but they have a large class of readers. Samant is well known for a quiet portrayal of domestic life. The writings of Sane – popularly known as Sane Guruji – have become a byword for softness, sentimentalism and a humanity that is usually too sugary. He is very widely read by the adolescent. Bokil strikes a different vein by his humour and satire. Most of these writers, and especially Bokil, make for a reaction against the Phadke school. These novels breaks away from the romantic tradition which presents its hero and heroine with a halo of noble virtues or on a background of aristocratic affluence. They also turn away from the easy and superficial idealism of Khandekar. They do not, however, always maintain a high level of characterisation ; they are often vitiated by an exaggerated light-heartedness or a distorted view of life. But their attempt at a return towards realism is a welcome change.

Two women writers, Vibhavari Shirurkar and Gita Sane contributed richly to this vein. The contribution of women to the Marathi novel dates back to the 1870s. Salubai Tambwekar wrote *Chandraprabha Viraha Varnan* – a novel of the pundit school of *Muktamala*. Most of the work of women novelists suffers from imitation of the traditions set up by men, but almost every novel also shows traces of feeling and observation which only a woman's heart and a woman's eye are capable of. These form the vital parts of their work. They grow with the emancipation and education of women. The first part of Kashibai Kanetkar's *Palkhicha Gonda* gives a vivid example of how truly and how simply a woman who had come into her own could write. Work of this kind has not been plentiful but its tradition has been maintained up to date. The spontaneous sincerity of most of these was enriched by an intellectuality and an analytical realism by Vibhavari Shirurkar and Gita Sane. Vibhavari Shirurkar's *Bali* (1950) ventures out boldly beyond the field of women's life. It may safely be described as the finest novel of its decade. It affords a finely sensitive portrayal of a young lad of a criminal tribe against the background of the conflict of values and ideologies in modern life.

The Marathi novel has gained in scope and variety during the last two decades. Rural life, with depiction of the life of aboriginals like Bhils, is a special feature of the novels of R. W. Dighe. His description of monsoons and harvests, floods and mountain life, together with the unsophisticated emotions of tribal people have given a new flavour to the novel. Shridhar Deshpande belongs to the Phadke school in technique, but he has also expanded the scope of the novel by locating many of his stories beyond Maharashtra. Bedekar wrote only one novel *Ranangan*, but it has a place by itself on account of its international canvas and skilful technique. Its sincerity and deep humanism are unmistakable. Thokal is well-known for his portrayal of rural life. The events of 1942 have provided vital material for some fairly successful novels. Shirwadkar's *Vaishnav* uses these as a background for the portrait of a simple, diffident school teacher. After 1940, a growing strain of socio-economic thought is visible in portrayal of character and background. But this new element has yet to be assimilated in the novel. It often proves too heavy for technical excellence.

1950 may be taken as the latest landmark. It saw the publication of Vibhavari Shirurkar's *Bali*. Biwalkar's *Sunita* — a story of Noakhali, written with

a rare combination of technical skill with personal experience and sympathy – has also made history. S. N. Pendse is producing novels like *Ellgar*, *Haddapar*, and *Garambicha Bapu* which seem to be growing in power and maturity. His stories are located in Konkan and are steeped in rich knowledge of and feeling for the land and its people. His sole and deepest concern, however, is the simple, lonely individual man.

The Marathi novel has a history of a century. It had a varied course. It stormed through the rocks of didacticism and decorativeness to reach the expanse and profundity of the work of Apte. Writers of the twenties and thirties gave it a grace of form and expression, experimented with topics and content and added to its rich significance. It has been moving towards greater depth and expanse in the fifties.

The Short Story.—The trends in the short story of the early days and the influences that operated upon it, are almost of the same kind as those in the field of the novel. It was ushered in on a stream of translations ; it was didactic in its nonage, and gradually acquired form during the days of Hari Narayan Apte. But even Apte's stories cannot be properly called short stories. They are novelettes or short narratives, rather than ' short stories ' in the precise modern sense. They

were known as *Sphuta Goshti* and not *Laghu Katha* as the modern short story is now called. They generally consist of a longish narrative of a series of events concerning some persons. Or sometimes they gave a depiction of certain memorable circumstances and events, as in Apte's portrayal of the days of plague and famine. Many of his successors like Paranjpe, Kolhatkar, Kelkar, and Joshi tried their hands at this form. But the truly modern short story came into its own only with the work of Phadke. Although he began writing in the old fashion, he gradually moved towards the new pattern with a precise and single core, neat construction and a polished style. Khandekar's stories added to the emotional richness and variety of canvas. He introduced the use of a poetic symbolism too, but it is perhaps a doubtful gain, for it inculcated a strain of artificiality. A different turn was given to the form by Diwakar Krishna with his introspective emotionalism. The inner life of the characters concerned acquired a greater delicacy and importance. Round about 1930 this introspective delicacy was further enriched by the women writers Kamalabai Tilak, Krishnabai, and Vibhavari Shirurkar. Shirurkar introduced a strong vein of social revolt too.

The field of the short story has since widened and

deepened in many ways with the regionalism of Lakshmanrao Sardesai, the simple domesticity of Y. G. Joshi, the varied humanism of Samant, and the sentimental didacticism of N. H. Apte and others. A new turn, however, was again given to the form by Chorghade, Prabhakar Padhye and others. Their story stands out by its poetic quality, its subjectivity and its synthesis of portrayal and analysis. It eliminates the narrative element to a very great extent. It catches a situation and unravels the skeins of thought and feeling. This is done by Chorghade by means of symbolism and suggestivity, by Padhye and others by analysis and poetic description.

Since the forties, a further change has come over the form. The short story of today has acquired a deeper psychological vein. It is almost a varied stream of consciousness woven around a situation. Sometimes, as in Arvind Gokhale's stories, it reveals a delicacy of emotion and humanism, a gossamer-like feeling for Nature. Sometimes, as in Gangadhar Gadgil's stories, it turns a keenly observant eye on the details of metropolitan life with its inhibitions and temptations, its complexities and bitterness. In Bhave's work, it acquires a passionate freedom and a profusion of expression. Madgulkar specialises in the depiction of village life, where he moves with

a rare ease, knowledge, and penetrative power. Each one of these has a style of his own. Gokhale's is significant and chaste, delicate in its precision. Gadgil's is somewhat profuse and analytical, with an aptitude for a crowd of significant images. Bhave loves words, often for themselves, but at other times uses them with a good deal of emotive power. He and Gadgil are inclined to be cynical in their attempts to expose the hypocrisy and degeneration of modern times.

The short story of today has certainly developed into a powerful weapon for quick and sharp depiction of the shams and shackles of contemporary life. Such a large number of writers with a point of view, a chosen field of observation and a notable skill in portraiture have taken to this form that it is not easy to map out all the trends. It is growing in variety and dynamic power.

The Drama

Like the English drama, Marathi drama too had its origin, in a certain kind of religious celebration. The 'Gondhalis' and 'Bahurupis' used to present semi-dramatic performances based on myths and stories from the Puranas. They were called 'Lalit'. This type gradually crystallised into a slightly more dramatic form. The earliest examples of this type

are found not in Maharashtra proper but in distant Tanjore. Shivaji's step-brother Vyankoji and his successors are well known for their patronage of arts and letters. Some stories of Sanskrit plays written for the benefit of these kings are extant. At a later date, Puranic plays like *Ganesh Lilarnav*, *Ganga-Kaveri* and others were composed by several authors who remained unknown, and whose plays, it appears, passed off under the names of the kings themselves. These plays are a mixture of prose and verse and also contain numerous songs known as 'Darawu' obviously introduced under the influence of the Tamil dramatic tradition. Two types of humorous drama are to be found in these Tanjore plays, 'Daur' and 'Korwanji', of which the latter is also derived from Tamil dramatic forms.[1] Thus Tamil plays have deeply influenced Marathi drama in its early stage. The tradition of these Tanjore plays seems to have travelled northwards towards Maharashtra proper, through Karnatak. A peripatetic group from North Karnatak known as Bhagwat Mandali visited the State of Sangli in 1843. It inspired Vishnudas Bhave, who was till then engaged in puppet-shows illustrating Puranic stories, to write the first Puranic play. This

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[1] S. G. Tulpule's Supplement to *Maharashtra Saraswat* by V. L. Bhave (1963), p. 902.

was the origin of the modern Marathi play of that *genre*.

The first period of Marathi drama is almost wholly Puranic. Vishnudas Bhave alone wrote about fifty such akhyanas. The dramatist usually contented himself with writing the songs and verses; the dialogue was made up impromptu or in rehearsals. Many companies sprang up, although the vocation of an actor was socially taboo. Soon these Puranic plays were supplemented by a romantic or often a historical theme. Conditions changed rapidly with the spread of education after the establishment of the Bombay University and its affiliated colleges, which became the homes of study of Sanskrit and English drama. A wave of translation of Sanskrit plays followed and about a decade after, of translation of English plays, especially those of Shakespeare like *Othello* (1861), *Tempest* and *Julius Caesar* (1872). Both these types of plays have wielded a very great influence over the Marathi play. The new learning, together with the growing consciousness of Indian tradition and history, led to the creation of the first full-fledged original play *Thorle Madhavrav Peshwe* ('Peshwa Madhaorao I') in 1861. It was written by V. J. Kirtane, brother of the young writer who had distinguished himself by boldly challenging

various points in *The History of the Marathas* written by Grant Duff. Along with N. J.'s historical acumen and a real feeling for Maratha history, V. J. also had dramatic talent. His second play *Jaypal* is the prototype of the romantic comedy. The currents of both historical tragedy and romantic comedy thus originate in the work of Kirtane. The first social play *Manorama*, written in 1871 by Madhav Balkrishna Chitale alias Bhajekar, reveals a good deal of improvement in technique[1].

But Marathi drama really came into its own with the days of Balwant Pandurang alias Annasaheb Kirloskar. He began his dramatic experiments at the age of twenty-three. He learnt all that there was to learn from the old Puranic play and the farces, and also from the Urdu drama ; and then he fashioned anew the modern Marathi play. Though he wrote only two and a half plays, *Shakuntala* (1880), *Saubhadra* (1882), and *Ram Rajya Viyog* (1884), they not only laid the foundation of Marathi drama but also reached a high-water mark of its achievements. The themes of Kirloskar are obviously derived either from Kalidas or from the Puranas. The first is a close and very successful rendering of

[1] S. N. Banhatti : *Marathi Drama and its Development.* 'Pradakshina', p. 165.

Kalidas's play. An additional source of beauty lies in its songs. *Saubhadra* stands at the very top of all Puranic plays in its delineation of character and its dramatic skill, in its intrigue and humour, in its refined artistry of structure. The rich melody of songs is also there. It has been on the Marathi stage for the last seventy years and yet it suffers from no staleness or satiated taste. *Saubhadra* presents a remarkable synthesis of the Puranic atmosphere and an almost modern content with its depiction of domestic relations. *Ram Rajya Viyog* remained incomplete, but yet has often been staged.

It is often believed that the main achievement of Kirloskar is the introduction of music on the stage. This is, however, a misconception. Marathi drama has had music in its veins since its birth, for its origin is traced back to the 'Lalit'. In the early days of the imitation and adaptation of Sanskrit plays the songs were monopolised by the Sutradhar alone. The Sangit Natak came into being with the plays of Trilokekar in 1879. He even distributed the songs among most of the major characters. But Kirloskar raised the level and variety of music; his songs are more apt and delicate. This, together with his other great dramatic qualities, has earned him the title of the Father of the Marathi Drama.

The success of the Sangit plays of Kirloskar created a craze. Many minor dramatists produced cheap and exaggerated imitations of the Kirloskar plays. But the tradition was nourished by a gifted disciple of Kirloskar – G. B. Deval. He produced adaptations of three English plays, two of Sanskrit plays, another one based on *Kadambari*. But the most outstanding of the lot was *Sharada*, his only original play which also happens to be the first full-fledged social play. His *Samshay-Kallol*, a marvellous adaptation of an English version of one of Moliere's plays, has held the Marathi stage to this day. His *Mrichchhakatik*, a rendering of the Sanskrit classic, is equally skilful and popular. But *Sharada* has given him a place of particular eminence in Marathi drama. Its theme is the vital one of the proposed marriage of convenience of the young daughter of an avaricious father to a tottering old man; its brilliantly-drawn characters have become proverbial for their social types. With its chaste, homely style and lucid songs, Deval's *Sharada* is still a great favourite of the Marathi playgoers. The play also brought about a change in the social role of drama. Unwittingly perhaps, it revealed the great power of the theatre as a means of progress and enlightenment; no longer was it merely a source of

refined collective amusement ; it became an organ of public opinion and also a powerful moulder of it. This power was richly utilized by K. P. Khadilkar a few years later. Deval was immediately followed by S. K. Kolhatkar who also tried to interest himself in social problems, but did not quite succeed in it. He was cast in a more academic and imaginative mould. He was more deeply influenced by the Shakespearian play and adaptations from Moliere than were any of his predecessors. He raised dramatic humour to a level of intellectuality and refinement. His songs are carefully composed, with a classic quality in their diction and musical setting. He wrote as many as twelve plays. The first, *Vir Tanay*, was a prize-winner. But only two of these plays are occasionally revived now. His work is characterised by an original and imaginative plot and an intellectual treatment of characters, easy and witty dialogue and a sprinkling of liberal social ideas. His two tragedies *Prem-shodhan* and *Janma-rahasya* are perhaps the most successful of all his plays.

Khadilkar was a disciple of Tilak and a journalist. He had already acquired a name in extremist political writing before he turned his hand to play-writing. He was influenced by the Shakespearian play even more profoundly than was Kolhatkar. The Marathi

stage of this time (1900-1905) was ringing with the great tragedies of Shakespeare. *Vikar-Vilasit*, Agarkar's adaptation of *Hamlet*, was the most successful of these. It was being presented before thrilled audiences by a great actor, Ganpatrao Joshi, who had fascinated even Western critics. Khadilkar's mental set-up was eminently fitted to imbibe the heroic grandeur, idealism and deep emotion of those tragedies. His first play, *Sawai Madhavravancha Mrityu* ('Death of Madhaorao II'), reflects this refined influence. But above all, he had a wonderful capacity of using Puranic stories to symbolise a modern political or social context, *Kichak-wadh* has a deep under-current of the political context of the bitter days of Lord Curzon. *Bhaubandki* symbolises and warns against internal schism, by the use of the story of the Peshwas. It is at once a historical and a political play. *Vidya-haran* depicts the very human struggle between love and honour in the story of Kacha and Devayani, and it also holds the subtle suggestion of the temptations that lay in wait for the young mind venturing upon Western civilization, or even the Western world. His *Manapman* is perhaps the only play which is purely romantic, but it is also characterised by idealism and deep feeling which are indeed the most outstanding qualities

of Khadilkar. In his later days, he overdid his knack of using a Puranic story to symbolise modern context. His plays became artificial. They were also weighed down by their music. They were written obviously and solely with the idea of giving full play to the musical gift of the celebrated actor of the times, Bal Gandharva. All the dramatic artistry of Khadilkar was sacrified for this. But at his best, Khadilkar is one of the greatest creators of modern Marathi drama.

Kolhatkar and Khadilkar began their play-writing almost simultaneously. Khadilkar ruled over the stage for a longer period. But the next great dramatist, Ram Ganesh Gadkari, draws more from the heritage of Kolhatkar's achievement than from that of Khadilkar. Gadkari, as a matter of fact, acknowledges Kolhatkar to be his Guru in drama. He carries on the trend of original and imaginative plot-construction, an intellectual treatment of characters, a style full of high conceit and poetic richness. He develops the element of humour to a degree not yet found in Marathi drama. Gadkari's humour is both verbal and situational. It also often arises out of character portrayal, and is sometimes based on natural short-comings of characters. His rich style, often alliterative, and as much capable of wit and

sarcasm as of a high poetic emotionalism, is one of the achievements of the Marathi stage. It was very much overdone in his early stage and in a different way in his last incomplete historical play *Raja-sannyas*. It is also felt that this style is not dramatic according to the true concept of a dramatic style, or it is not adapted to the needs of character portrayal But the best of Gadkari is characterised by a rich creativeness of language. His songs are worthy of the tradition of Kolha'kar.

Gadkari's dramatic work consists of four plays and a fifth incomplete one. His career was unfortunately cut short by an untimely death in 1920. His plays try to present social and moral problems. His plots and character portrayal are, therefore, distinguished for their psychological treatment. *Prem-sannyas* or 'Renunciation of Love' touches upon certain problems regarding marriage, like widow-remarriage and love-marriage. *Punya-prabhav* tries to portray the power and dominion of unflinching feminine chastity even upon a villainous mind. *Ekach Pyala* is supposed to depict the ruin of a happy family by drink, but is more devoted to an idealist portrayal of the loyalty of Sindhu to Sudhakar, in spite of his becoming a hard drunkard. But a mere statement of the themes of Gadkari proves totally inadequate as

an introduction to his plays, for they are essentially psychological and idealistic in grain. The basic conception and its powerful execution in a highly poetic and impassioned manner lend a grandeur and loftiness to both the characters and the play. This impassioned quality is strong enough to cover the faults of construction, of the lack of verisimilitude and of sense of proportion. His sub-plots and minor characters are both inspired and saved by the need and quality of humour, even when they suffer from artificiality or even from a lack of *raison d'etre.* Gadkari's plays are strongly individualistic in their approach towards life. Individualism is at once his strength and his weakness. It gives him a deeper glimpse into the minds of his characters, but at the same time, one misses the broad social significance, the appeal of a broader and more vital context of life, that one finds in Khadilkar's plays. This was the beginning of the decline of Marathi drama.

But just before, the years between 1915 and 1920 had been the heyday of Marathi drama. It was a period of spirited idealism in all fields of life, learning, and arts. The peak of this manifold idealism is represented in the plays of Khadilkar. The plays of his contemporaries, Kolhatkar and Gadkari were also on the boards during this period. At the same time,

a number of lesser dramatists of a more popular vein were also playing to thousands. Maharashtra had, as a matter of fact, become extremely play-minded during these years. Plays on the lives of saints, like *Sant Sakhubai* by H. N. Apte or *Sant Bhanudas* by N. C. Kelkar, fine historical plays like *Shiva-sambhav* by Wasudeo Shastri Khare, *Chandra-grahan* and *Shah-Shivaji* by Tipnis, *Bebandshahi* by Aundhkar and so many other social or romantic plays were being performed by various companies. The status of the actor and his social and intellectual level had also improved considerably. The Maharashtra Natak Mandali, which restricted itself to prose plays only as a matter of principle, rendered a specially noteworthy service in this matter. The Gandharva and Lalitkala companies, especially the former, came to be known for their enthralling music, luxurious equipment and almost aristocratic way of life. This was indeed the day of the glory of Marathi drama in all its aspects.

But, as always, this was also the beginning of its downfall. Excessive music in the plays led to a deterioration in dramatic taste and opened the path for the light-hearted and heterogeneous entertainment of the film world. The aristocratic ways of some companies led to their impoverishment. In the

general decline of idealism in the post-Tilak age, the dignified repertory of the Maharashtra Natak Mandali ceased to appeal both to new talent and to the new generation of audience. The Marathi stage fell on evil days.

Its main prop during this period was the renewal of realism by Mama Warerkar. He began his career in the orthodox Puranic fashion, with his *Kunja-vihari.* But he was soon drawn to the realistic approach towards social problems in the tradition of *Sharada* of Deval. Even as in the novel, he picked up the thread of the social realism of Apte. He brought to this tradition a gift of humour which compensated to some extent for the lack of a complete grip over reality. His *Hach Mulacha Bap,* based on the satirical and hilariously humorous description of the contrast between a Rao Bahadur's successive attitudes as the father of the would-be bridegroom and of the bride when arranging the marriages of his son and daughter, opened up a series of plays depicting the current social, economic, and industrial problems – his *Satteche Gulam, Sonyacha Kalas, Jagati Jyot, Swayam Sewak,* etc. Warerkar long remained in the vanguard of such dramatic portrayal of current problems. He has often proved incapable of probing to the full depths of such problems; his

realism often dwindled into sentimentality and fanciful solutions for real problems, but he did help greatly in keeping up the morale of the Marathi stage by fixing its attention on the realistic play when it was sinking deeper and deeper into the marshes of mere music and unreal plots.

Warerkar also brought about considerable change in dramatic technique and the production of plays. He gradually reduced the number of songs, improved the structure of plays by reducing the number of scenes in an act and making it better bound, and later, by adopting a number of the characteristics of Ibsenian drama. He also modernised stage equipment. He had not been gifted with the poignant imaginative power of Gadkari or the large-hearted acumen of Kirloskar. But he used his talent well and purposefully. *Saraswat,* one of his last plays, with its maturity of experience and poignancy of expression, is one of the most noteworthy in Marathi.

The process of modernisation of the stage begun by Warerkar was taken up whole-heartedly by a band of enlightened artists called Natya-Manvantar under the leadership of Vartak (1933). One of the greatest innovations was that the roles of women were played by women actors of good social standing and of intellectual calibre. This practice has now become

well established. But beyond his *Andhalyanchi Shala,* a play that is still popular, it did not achieve much in the line of production of plays as such.

A greater source of strength to Marathi drama has been the work of P. K. Atre who came to the fore-front just about this time. His plays have the modernity of Warerkar's plays and the style of Natya-Manvantar, and they have a much greater vitality of spirit and expression. They may be divided into three types – the light comedy or burlesque, the grave social play, and the problem play or ideational play. He came to the stage with a burlesque, hilariously satirising some dominant topics in Maratha contemporary life. He showed all the skill of a Gadkari in word-play and humour. His humour often runs away with him; his characters become caricatures. These traits, which are not only permissible but even characteristic in burlesque, become defects in a grave social play. Exuberant wit and exaggerated feeling lead to unnaturalness, both of character and situation. But in spite of all this, the exuberance and the exaggeration, themselves as it were, lend a force and a vitality to his plays. His burlesque *Sashtanga Namaskar* and his social plays *Gharabaher* and *Udyacha Samsar* have been some of the major successes of the stage of today.

As was seen before, Marathi drama in its first flush turned a good deal towards the plays of Shakespeare. Many of them were translated and adapted to the Marathi stage. Shakespearian tragedies like *Hamlet* and *Othello* contributed richly to the nurture of Marathi histrionic art and dramatic writing. Kolhatkar imbibed a good deal of the spirit of romantic comedy, whereas Gadkari's plays were not a little influenced by the tragedies. With Warerkar, the norm changed. Ibsenian thought and Ibsenian dramatic form became a more active force, but however active it may have been, it was a pretty far cry from the true Ibsenian pattern, and all vestige of it except the modernity of stage equipment disappeared in the plays and productions of Rangnekar. His plays are neat and pretty, with delightful, snappy conversation, conventional and easily palatable situations, and attractive songs. Like the Natya-Manvantar's, his band of artists known as Natya-Niketan, consists of refined art-lovers like Jyotsna Bhole who was the main appeal of the theatre in the very difficult times of the competition with the Film.

A new wave of idealism and greater ambition in dramatic writing can be noticed during the last few years. There is a richer stream of translations and adaptations from foreign plays. Writers are ranging

over a wider field now for their originals, in Manohar's adaptation of Carl Kapek's *Mother*, Shirwadkar's adaptation of *Monna Vanna*, P. L. Deshpande's adaptation of *Inspector-General*, or Vakil's of *The Inspector Calls*. Shirwadkar has attempted a couple of historical and Puranic themes in a modernistic style — with more of the poetic in it, however, than the dramatic. Another writer of promise is Jog, with three plays to his credit, two of which have been on the stage. So far, he seems to be one of the most original of the present-day play-wrights, with a positive social context to vitalize his plays. His presentation, however, even if it be of the rough and bold vein, needs maturity and finish of its own kind.

The Marathi 'Natika' or short play began as an undergrowth of drama but has by now become a great support of the stage. The audience tired out with the professional long play which had more music than drama in it and which dragged on till the early hours of the morning, took eagerly to the short play, often presented by amateurs and semi-professionals. It proved one of the greatest, perhaps the sole, force against the appeal of the films. N. D. Tamhankar, Rangnekar, Bokil, V. S. Vakil and others have experimented in this field. The one-act play is also gradually taking root.

A novel idea in dramatic writing called 'Natya-Chhata' was introduced by Diwakar Krishna, somewhat on the pattern of Browning's Dramatic Monologues but in prose. They are in a variety of veins – poetic, satirical, cynical, emotional. They reveal a sensitive, keen-eyed personality. The type found a good many followers.

Modern Marathi Poetry

Unlike Marathi prose of the early years of the modern period, Marathi poetry did not have to make a new beginning. The traditions of Waman and Moropant were yet alive. Poets imitated their technique and style and the eldest of these, Parasuramtatya Godbole, rendered a great service by editing an anthology of select pieces from old Marathi poetry. His book *Nawanit* (1854) has run into several editions and was very much in use until recently and it has now been reprinted by the Maharashtra Government after being out of print for several years. The work is a clear index of the preservation of poetic tradition, and presents fine representative passages from all the leading poets and poetic types. Godbole also wrote a good deal of didactic and devotional verse after the patterns of Moropant.

The poets of these early years can be divided into two classes. The first were the pundit poets, like Krishnashastri Chiplunkar, Lele, Parakhi. They carried on the Sanskritistic traditions of Moropant in technique and style but showed originality in the choice of subjects even in their translations of Sanskrit pieces. They preferred descriptive Sanskrit poetry like *Ritu-samhar* or the great classical epics like *Raghu-vamsha,* to the Puranic stories. They introduced to Marathi readers the classical works of Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, Shudrak and others. The second class of the poets of these times was of those who turned towards English poetry. They translated or adapted English poems and introduced a variety of thought, approach, subject, and style. Milton, Dryden, Scott, Pope, Grey, Goldsmith, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Shelley — these were the patterns they held before themselves. Pradhan translated and adapted Scott's *Lady of the Lake.* Kirtikar translated Tennyson's *Princess.* Mahajani, Kirtikar and others turned towards English lyrics and wrote some original ones in a similar vein. The most original of these poets was M. M. Kunte who tried his hand at a new type of epic poem in his *Raja Shivaji.* Like Wordsworth, he advocated the use of the language of every-day life in poetry,

and the need of bridging the gulf between the erudite and the common folk. He practised what he preached, sometimes with success, but more often to the detriment of poetic values. His *Raja Shivaji* remained incomplete, but it brought about a great change in poetic outlook. A marked tendency towards simplicity in diction grew. A good number of historical poems were also written. The inculcation of the spirit of English poetry made this neo-Marathi poetry more thoughtful, direct, and individualistic. The personal feelings and experiences of the poets acquired significance. A number of elegies were written and a few attempts were also made at satire. The lyric, the satire, the elegy, the long narrative poem – were some of the new forms adopted and popularised by these precursors of modern Marathi poetry.

Although the seeds of this poetic renaissance were sown so carefully and consciously, the harvest that followed was so sudden and rich that it was almost of the nature of a revolution rather than a gradual growth. 'Keshavsut', Tilak, Vinayak, Chandrashekhar, 'Bee', and Tambe wrote with such originality and individuality that in comparison with it, the poetry of the preceding age seems only a halting imitation of foreign or Sanskrit patterns. The

greatest and foremost of these was Keshavsut or Krishnaji Keshav Damle. He is known not only as the maker of his age but also as one whose influence continues to permeate Marathi poetry to this day.

Keshavsut began writing in about 1885, in a style similar to that of the pundit poets preceding him. But very soon he cast off the fetters of the external as well as the traditional norms. He began to write in a free, subjective vein, intense in its lyrical beauty and impassioned thought. He looked deep within his own personality, which was already well developed under the influence of his concentrated, if not very wide, reading of English works. He had acquired a feeling for Nature, a radicalism in social and political thought and also a strong vein of melancholy that often overshadowed his dynamism and broad social interests. He gave deep thought to the problems of poetic life, like the objectives of poetry, the relation between thought and expression, the impact of environment upon the individual. Poetry occupied an extremely vital place in his life. Never before in Marathi poetry were strains of intense experience and poetic expression so intertwined together. His lines to a flower (पुष्पा प्रत), his poem on hearing the strains of a *sitar* during his nightly wanderings, his expression of yearning after

an elusive idealism in his poem *Harapale Shreya* (हरपले श्रेय) rise to an exquisite synthesis of subjectivity and universality, of delicacy and poignancy. He struck the path of true social thought and progressiveness in poetry. He shows a keen awareness of the political thought of the day. He was as much a lover of the child mind as was Wordsworth. His diction is simple and powerful, often it is considered to verge on crudeness, but it can acquire delicacy and suggestivity according to the poetic need, as it does in so many of his poems. He invented some new forms of lyrical verse, and also used old forms in a new manner. For instance, he used the old Sanskrit metre of 'Shardul-Vikridit' for the structure of a sonnet and introduced a form in Marathi poetry which had a Sanskrit metre and English structure. A generation later this sonnet form became a craze in Marathi.

The genius of Rev. N. W. Tilak was of a quieter vein. The beauty of Nature and the innocence and lovability of children, and a deep, unquestioning devotion to God are the mainstreams of his work. He wrote in a simple and chaste style, in a serene and even verse. He wrote a number of long poems, some meditative like *Wanwasi Phul* and some narrative like *Sushila*. He was older than Keshavsut, but

was deeply influenced by the latter's work. His lyricism is of the same kind, though not so intense and powerful. He also began an epic poem on Christ (*Khhristayan*) but could not complete it. Tilak is perhaps the last of the old Marathi tradition of saint-poets.

Vinayak, Madhavanuj and Dutt – three other contemporaries of Keshavsut, did not rise to similar heights. Vinayak has a greater individuality. His muse was preoccupied mainly with historical narratives, some of which are fairly powerful and capable of suggesting the contrast with the contemporary times. They are acknowledged to be the origin of modern Marathi patriotic poetry.

The influence of English on Maratha minds is obvious in the *nom de plume* 'Bee' adopted by N. M. Gupte. But his poetry is written in a chaste, even highly Sanskritised style. It is imbued with Indian philosophy, and a feeling for Nature which often leads to a mystic vein. He has a feeling for history – which has been crystallised in a fine narrative poem. His poem on the tearful humour of a poor father at the childlike sorrows of his daughter is very well known. His love lyric *Chapha* (*champak*) is a rare expression of the ethereality and aloofness of idealistic love. His *Vedgane* (वेडगाणें) reveals at once

the intense intoxication of inspiration and its star-gazing sweep. The diction of 'Bee' is finely chiselled, his imagery rich and varied. He was also influenced by the social progressivism of the day. He lived up to the forties, but wrote very little in his later days.

Chandrashekhar remained aloof from the main currents of contemporary poetry. His subjects and style belong to a bygone day. He did not approve of much self-expression in poetry either. But his highly-cultivated style and smooth verse have given him a place in modern Marathi poetry. He was particularly good at adaptation. His best narrative poem 'What a Miracle' (काय हो चमत्कार) is an adaptation from English. He also adapted Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Chandrashekhar hardly seems to have influenced any poets of his time or later. But Tambe, who also struck a note different from that of the dominant one of Keshavsut, found a number of followers. Tambe was an artistic and philosophic dreamer. His imagery is drawn from the world of chivalric romance; his thought is moulded by strains of Indian philosophy. He writes in a richly musical and decorative style. He did not approve of making his muse a vehicle of social progressivism. There is a strain of eroticism even in his mysticism.

He wrote some poems for children, and dramatic lyrics of a high order and also introduced many new patterns of verse rhythm.

Ram Ganesh Gadkari, or 'Govindagraj' as he preferred to be known in the field of poetry, and Thomre alias 'Balkavi' were the chief heirs of Keshavsut in the next generation. Gadkari was proud to call himself a true disciple of Keshavsut. He was inspired by the same kind of emotionalism, individualism, social progressivism and such other tendencies of Keshavsut. He had an even greater command over diction and verse, music and rhythm. He has added richly to the treasure of Marathi poetry in sentiment and artistry. And yet, he cannot very aptly be thought of as a true disciple of Keshavsut. They were temperamentally different. Gadkari was an extrovert, always conscious of his audience. He had already acquired a name in the spheres of drama and the humorous essay. One cannot help feeling that he wrote to impress rather than to express. He wrote in a richly decorative style, loaded with fanciful conceits rather than illumined with imaginative or emotional truth.

Balkavi was endowed with a truer lyrical vein. There is a rare delicacy in his depiction of the beauty of Nature. His playful fancy hovering round a

flowerbud, dancing with the streamlet, or buzzing with the bee, makes his *nom de plume* richly significant. But a deep melancholy overclouded all these very soon. Some of the poignant poems he wrote under its influence are as unforgettable as his early ones were fascinating. He died very young, but has left enough poetic work to secure for him a place of glory in the history of Marathi poetry.

The strain of heroic poetry found in old Marathi poetry, in the form of Powadas, is not totally missing in modern poetry. Apart from occasional patriotic poetry, a number of Powadas also were written by modern poets. Govindagraj wrote one on *Panipat*; Sawarkar, the hero of 'Life Sentence' and a radical political worker from his early days, has poured out his intense ardour for freedom in his two Powadas on *Baji Prabhu* and *Tanaji*. His patriotic ardour is, as a matter of fact, the main current in his sonorous, grim poetry. Sometimes he wrote lyrics, and occasionally long poems like *Gomantak* inspired by militant Hinduism. Often his muse could strike the louder, picturesque note too, as in his narrative poem *Kamala*. His friend Govind also wrote in an ardent patriotic vein.

The work of two generations from Keshavsut to Balkavi spreads over the period from 1885 to 1920.

As we have seen, in tracing the growth of prose, the nineteen-twenties saw a great change in spirit and outlook in Maharashtra. The age of a love of craftsmanship, of polish and finish set in. At the same time, it was also the age of expansion of the reading public and the audience of poetry. Art and culture, literature and poetry were brought to the doorsteps of the common man, by various organs of public opinion and of education. The emotions of the common man, with his struggle for existence, his domesticity, his limited appreciation of beauty, and his moderate range of emotion became the food for poetry as well as for fiction. In place of the lonesome individuality and radicalism of Keshavsut or the eagle vigour of Sawarkar, or even the gossamer lyricism of Balkavi, there arose the group-consciousness and middle class sentimentalism of the Ravi Kiran Mandal. The leading poets of this group, Yashwant and Girish, gave poetry recitals — a vogue which was already made popular by a few other minor poets like Tekade. The poetry of the Ravi Kiran Mandal in a way popularised many traditions of simple Marathi poetry and also invented new patterns of prosody and content. These poets are not without distinctive personalities. Yashwant, the most successful of them all, has vigour

of feeling and directness of style. His range is also wider than that of most of his colleagues. Some of his poems soar to good lyrical height. Girish is more chastened and sophisticated, less powerful in sentiment and sweep. Patwardhan or 'Madhav Julian', in his early days the most unorthodox and explicit, became a most erudite virtuoso in his later days. He was a scholar of Persian and a lover of English poetry. His style was imbued with the first influence and his muse tried to learn something of the abandon of Persian poetry. Sometimes it revealed the lyricism of the second influence. Most of these poets are prolific writers. They have done a good deal in the line of the long narrative poem — some of them being full of a mild and sentimental social progressivism, others like *Sudharak* by Patwardhan being in a satirical vein. Technically, the best achievement of these poets was to adjust the poetic vein to the taste and level of the middle class reader. They do not reveal the daring ardour and keen introspection of Keshavsut, or the subtle suggestivity and beauty of words of Balkavi. Nor can they rise to the rich sensuousness or the philosophical eroticism of Tambe. But they wrote in a style that dovetails poetic diction with the common speech. They composed in a verse that could linger on the lips of

the middle class. They certainly helped in giving grace and awareness to its feelings. Their greatest success was in a true portrayal of these feelings. The mother and child, the wife waiting for her husband, the flower dropped on the road, a patriot behind prison walls, the dying child of a poor man — such are the themes they deal with, often with considerable emotional ardour and lucidity of phrase and always with their feet on the solid ground of reality. With a growing freedom for women, there had come about a shift in their social position and in the general outlook towards them. They were no longer either objects of worship or of mere pleasure. They had acquired a human quality and the position of comrades in life. Without sermonising about this change, the poetry of the Ravi Kiran Mandal accepts it with naturalness and urbanity. Their love lyrics are a tacit admission of this. They may not be very profound, but they are graceful, chaste, and usually restrained, though a few, like those of Madhav Julian, are sometimes highstrung and extravagant. The Ravi Kiran Mandal made poetry more broad-based than it ever had been in the modern age. Naturally, poetry recitals became extremely popular.

Contemporaneous with the Ravi Kiran Mandal, but quite apart from its school of poetry, were some

younger poets writing in their own individual way. One such was Anant Kanekar, whose love lyrics sometimes spoke of a deep enchantment, sometimes of cynicism arising out of the threat of disappointment. He wrote a few poems of radical thought. But Kanekar discarded the lyre very soon. Borkar, another noteworthy poet, is a remarkable artist in words. A feeling of the picturesque in Nature and a sense of the music of words are his outstanding gifts. There are many others of the same age and time, like B. S. Pandit, W. N. and G. H. Deshpande, Patil, Pathak, N. G. Joshi and others who are following their own bent and putting in good work. In some there is a trend of mysticism, in others word-craft and a sense of beauty, in still others a reflective turn. A. R. Deshpande or 'Anil' writes in a manner more individual, subtle and delicate, especially in his love lyrics. These range over all the subtle shades of the agony of suspense to the thrill of fulfilment. In them is found a rare synthesis of awareness of the beauty of Nature and a depth of personal feeling rising to the level of mysticism. The music and imagery of these lyrics is distinctive in its delicacy and serenity. A still more noteworthy point about Anil is that this early individualistic love of his has widened into a social consciousness and a true huma-

nity. It has enlarged his poetic horizon and given vigour to his later lyrics and especially to his long poems in free verse. 'Mukta-Chhand', as free verse is known in Marathi, was invented and propagated by Anil. It has now become a greatly used vehicle of longer verse and also of the reflective lyric. To Anil goes the credit of bringing about a change in the concept of 'Khanda-kavya' or the longer poem. He holds that with the development of the short story and the short novel, both of which have by now grown deeply psychological and emotional, the major field for the long poem should now be that of emotive thought or meditative feeling, and that Mukta-Chhand or verse which would be free enough to follow the turns and subtleties of such thought is, therefore, necessary. His own long poems, *Bhagna-murti* ('The Broken Idol'), *Prem ani Jivan* ('Love and Life'), *Nirwasit Chini Mulas* ('To a Refugee Chinese Child') follow this norm. The poetic thought and achievement of Anil have made him the fountain-head of one dominant trend of the poetry of today.

Kusumagraj, Kant and a few others represent another trend. They have a deep lyrical vein, and they were also stirred deeply by the freedom movement. There is a political ardour in their poems,

not only a consciousness but a note of experience of political struggle, with its shades of unflinching sacrifice and wistful sentiment, its righteous indignation and protest against injustice. Kusumagraj is a master of word-picture. Indeed, his poetry is multi-dimensional. He has not yet written anything in the line of longer verse and his lyrics too are now not too frequent. But what he has written has a power and a chiselled beauty, a delicacy and a resilience which have reached a high-water mark in modern Marathi poetry.

A good number of women poets have risen to a high level during the last two decades. Their line has been maintained since the days of yore but the women poets of today have achieved a rare height of lyricism, subtlety of feeling and directness of expression. Such are Sanjivani Marathe, with her playful frankness, her domesticity, her genuine love of poetry; or 'Padma' with her delicate, often wistful sentiment; and perhaps best of all, Indira Sant, with the delicacy of love in her happy days, with a poignant restraint and sensitive imagery in her days of sorrow.

The most discussed tendency of today, however, is that of extreme realism, which is known as *Nava-kavya*. B. S. Mardhekar was its chief exponent. His poems seek to communicate the feeling of the

disintegration of human personality which overpowers the modern mind. They are very realistic and representative, inasmuch as they are a cry of the thwarted mind and the hungry soul. They also reveal a keen consciousness of the *malaise* of the modern world, but bat-like, it only flaps its wings in the dark. More than these fundamental qualities of his work, Mardhekar's poems have caught attention because of their unusual imagery and diction. His is not an experiment in form, but he uses strange combinations of images drawn from the world of machines, physiology, and biology. He adds to this the strangeness of diction in which is thrown an assortment of foreign technical words and Marathi slang. Much of his verse is therefore found unreadable and unpalatable by the orthodox, but its power can hardly be denied. He has already found a good number of followers and imitators, some of whom are well on the way of a true and judicious modernity in poetry.

When one thinks of the poetry of today, one thinks of Vasant Bapat and Mangesh Padgaonkar, of 'Muktibodh' and Bhave and Karandikar. It is not easy to map out precisely the trends in Marathi poetry of today. It is said to draw a good deal upon the forms in the work of Anil and Mardhekar.

Marathi poetry of today is indeed very varied, multi-dimensional. A generation of young poets has arisen, which is working out a wonderful synthesis of full-blooded romanticism with keen-eyed realism. It is throbbing with the love of beauty and is also brave enough to face the ugliness of life. It has the sophistry of satire and the naïveté of a wondering child. It has sufficient philosophic background to assert confidently the glory of earthliness, and it does so in words ringing with music and resplendent with beauty. Sometimes in its despair it describes the lifeless corpses that people the earth, the greed and avarice that stalk over it; but it is also far-sighted enough to look ahead towards the dawn that is almost there. It is conscious of tradition and makes full use of it, but it is also boldly experimental. It sometimes lapses into prose or obscurity, or jingling sounds, but so much more frequently it rises to a poignant lyricism, a suave urbanity, or a sonorous hymnlike note. The rising poets of today have their own individuality, their special aptitudes and their weaknesses but together they give a vigorous vision of life in its scintillating variety. They are worthy heirs of a rich tradition.

Literary Criticism

In the early periods of Marathi literature there was

hardly any effort at the formation of a literary theory. Traditions of Sanskrit 'Sahitya Shastra' were maintained studiously by the pundits, but even efforts to render those principles in Marathi were few and far between. The only extant examples are a chapter each on *Rasa Manjari* by Nagesh and Vitthal. But if there was no effort at the formation of a theory, there is a wealth of very fundamental thought about the vital problems regarding poetry – like the nature and object of poetry, the relation of the poet with his audience, or the qualities of good poetry, in the works of all the saints from Dnyaneshwar to Tukaram and Ramdas. Their attitude towards these problems is distinct enough to be remarkable. It differs from that of classical Sanskrit poetry. Just as an intensity of feeling and a personal approach were the mainsprings of Bhakti Marga, they were also the basis of the poets' attitude towards poetry. Dr. Ketkar, the encyclopaedic genius of modern Maharashtra, was the first to point out that these Maratha saints had new principles of poetics, that these stood manifest in their works, and that they even propounded them in their works – though only incidentally, as they did not lay these down systematically in a well-marshalled poetic theory. Had they done this, it would have

given a new turn to the old 'Sahitya Shastra' and redeemed it from its stagnation. A greater awareness of the contribution of the saints to poetic theory is found in recent Marathi criticism.

Modern Marathi criticism began with the rise of the early periodicals. The early critics naturally wrote in an appreciative and amplificatory manner. They aimed at introducing Sanskrit or old Marathi books to their readers. Some, like Justice Ranade, undertook the labour of providing occasional lists of publications with encouraging comments. When the epoch-making periodical of Chiplunkar, *Nibandhamala,* started publication, a new age in criticism too was inaugurated as it was in other aspects of literature. Criticism became more comprehensive and penetrating, more studied and valuational. Chiplunkar's own articles on various works — Sanskrit, Marathi and English — provided the best examples of these. Agarkar and Tilak also contributed richly, though only occasionally, to this current. Their criticism, even like that of Chiplunkar to some extent, was motivated more by what are known as pure literary values. The age of these values was ushered with the advent of Kolhatkar.

Kolhatkar can, to a great extent, be called the founder of modern Marathi Literary Criticism. He

lifted it into a class, distinct from that of the periodical review. He probed into theoretical problems of literary forms with considerable thoroughness and depth and also a wealth of literary training. Often he brought his sense of humour to lend charm and distinctive flavour to his attacks upon mediocrity and literary fatuousness. Kelkar, his great contemporary and friend, wrote elegantly and good-naturedly, sometimes even profoundly, on various forms. His writings were mostly occasioned by the demand for forewords or speeches. The presidential speeches of various literary organizations, especially those of the Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan, have added notably to critical writing. Such speeches had supplied periodical reviews of Marathi literature as a whole and have also treated of various fundamental theoretical problems. One of the most astute and balanced critics of the nineteen-twenties was Waman Malhar Joshi.

Round about 1930, a keen controversy about the objectives of literature was initiated. N. S. Phadke, the well-known protagonist of 'Art for Art's Sake', propagated his views with seductive persuasiveness and nicety of argument. Many writers and critics of ability joined issue, the chief of them being V. S. Khandekar and Jawdekar. Phadke represents

a fairly large section of writers and perhaps a large section of readers, who believe the end of literature to be only to delight. The others, perhaps a still larger section, are of course neither as adolescent nor as antiquated as to think of the end being instruction, but look for a more vital relation with life, a greater integrity, and social consciousness on the part of the writer.

With the development of research departments of Universities, and improvement in the status of Indian languages and literature, a great impetus has been received by the study of Sanskrit Sahitya Shastra. The three major aspects of this Shastra – Alankar, Dhwani and Rasa – have all received great attention at the hands of Marathi scholars since the thirties. Thorough and scholarly efforts at the presentation and evaluation of Sanskrit theories and even at a synthesis of such theories and modern sciences like psychology have been made by scholars like D. K. Kelkar, R. S. Jog, Watwe, G. T. Deshpande and others.

English criticism and critical methods have wielded perhaps an even greater influence upon Marathi criticism. The review in periodicals was obviously adopted from English. But Marathi acquaintance with English literary criticism and literary biographies

has grown steadily throughout the generation and has brought about changes and developments which are far from being merely mechanical or imitative. Methods of poetic appreciation, character analysis, analysis of the objectives of various modern forms of literature have grown much along the lines of such methods in English literature. Critical histories of various forms like modern poetry, drama, novel — have been written up to date and a new line has been struck in literary biography and autobiography. Marxism and socialism have not been without their effect upon critical thinking. In the early thirties, Lalji Pendse tried to evaluate and analyse certain Marathi trends and works in the light of Marxism. But his grasp over neither of these two proved adequate. His books only provoked a series of articles from P. Y. Deshpande, which sought to establish the vital principle of subjectivity and personal realization of the artist, of the conflict between the artist's personality and environment being the true source of art. This exposition has been much discussed, supplemented and enriched by various writers. Just as controversy about literary theory was polarised between the schools of Art for Art's Sake group or the 'Anandwadis' and its opposite camp, the 'Jivanwadis' in the twenties, so the literary

thought in the forties was polarised between the points of subjective realization of the artist and the demands of social consciousness. Many versatile critics like Padhye, W. L. Kulkarni, Mardhekar, Kshirsagar, D. K. Bedekar and others have contributed richly to the development of the issues.

The modern Marathi critic is thus a keen-minded writer, well accustomed to the tools of his task. He is as a rule deeply imbued with the awareness of his literary heritage. He combines historicity with vision. He is conscious of the urgent need of an equipoise regarding the subjective and the objective in literature. He has not only realized the changeability of forms of literature but knows that their vitality rests in their dynamic quality. He does not therefore seek to judge them by a stereotyped or lifeless foot-rule. He seeks for their inner pattern and considers it his duty to interpret and communicate an experience of the beauty of literature rather than correct or judge it. He seeks to do this all the more earnestly because he believes that great literature also seeks to interpret what is most significant in life and to communicate the beauty of it. He knows that in this lies the power of literature to rouse and to console, to entertain and also to expand the vision of mankind.

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  S. R. Tikekar
- Dnyandeo—Life, Mission and Philosophy
  S. V. Dandekar
- Tukaram
  Prof. K. V. Belsare
- Eknath
  Dr. Shridhar Kulkarni
- Origin of Marathi Theatre
  B. S. Naik
- A Century of Marathi Theatre
  K. Narain Kale
- Modern Marathi Theatre
  D. G. Nadkarni
- Marathi Literature—A Review
  Kusumavati Deshpande
- Marathi Journalism
  T. V. Parvate
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  Prof. G. H. Ranade
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  Dr. Sarojini Babar